POEMS OF WORDSWORTH

W. Shuter, 1798

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

The Lake Library Edition

POEMS
OF
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

WITH
ARNOLD'S ESSAY ON WORDSWORTH

Edited by
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TO THE MEMORY OF

RAYMOND MACDONALD ALDEN

1873-1924

SCHOLAR, CRITIC, TEACHER

WHO NOBLY CARRIED FORWARD THE TORCH

PREFACE

An effort is made in this volume to present in convenient form the vital work of William Wordsworth. Living today and still to live, there is passion in him that carries truth alive into the heart of generation after generation. There can be no final agreement as to what this vital work is, but in these selections may be found those early lyrics and narratives that in the receptive mind never fail to arouse enthusiasm. In addition to these are included important portions of the longer poems that particularly show Wordsworth's ambitions and purposes and his attitude toward society; and further, a small group of poems to be remembered for some unforgettable felicities of expression. As a matter of fact, however, it is the poems that he wrote as a first challenge to his contemporaries that will always be of greatest interest. As Arnold says, "It is no exaggeration to say that within one single decade . . . almost all of his really first-rate work was produced." This enduring poetry was written while he still took the forward view in life, and must always appeal to those, young or old, who take the forward view.

The biographical and explanatory sections as well as the notes have been written with the student's point of view always in mind. The information given is intended to be useful and suggestive rather than exhaustive and scholastic. Notes of estimate and appreciation are very few, and are always introduced to point the reader in the right direction, and, if possible, show him the principles of wise judgment and taste rather than to point out dogmatically what he ought to like. It is hoped that the student will find in this information and suggestion what

he needs, when added to his own thought, to make Wordsworth's purpose and achievements clear.

Critical estimates of Wordsworth have not ceased, nor are they likely to cease until that millenium when romanticist and classicist shall lie down as the lamb and the lion. Meanwhile, the essay of Matthew Arnold endures as one of the wisest general criticisms of Wordsworth that have appeared. It is here included in the introductory matter. It is the estimate of a man in almost all respects the opposite of Wordsworth—in instincts, training, outlook upon life—yet a man sympathetic enough to feel keenly the elder poet's fineness and strength, to acknowledge his services to literature and to humanity, and to appraise him at his true value.

The order of the selections is in general that in which they were written. Exceptions to this order are made in the sonnets, which are grouped to show their unity, and in the portions from *The Prelude, The Excursion,* and *The Recluse* which occupy a place at the end.

In appendixes are placed a few selections from Wordsworth's earlier work, as illustrating his first style, some of his unfortunate minor poems, the preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads,* and the famous criticisms of Coleridge and Jeffrey.

Acknowledgment is made to the Oxford University Press for its courteous permission to use the Wordsworth text as edited by Mr. Thomas Hutchinson; the dates given to the poems are also those assigned by Mr. Hutchinson.

The indebtedness of the editor to the second edition of Wordsworth's Works by Professor Knight, to Professor Émile Legouis' *Early Life of William Wordsworth,* and to Professor Harper's *William Wordsworth* is of the kind that any recent writer upon Wordsworth is glad to own.

HOWARD J. HALL

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INTRODUCTION

I. Wordsworth's Life

A century and a quarter has passed since two young men threw the gauntlet into the lists of English poetic art, and another contest was on such as youth is ever waging against the things that are. The dust of that conflict settled long ago, and the trampled earth has since yielded great tonnage of criticism, though contests involving similar principles in art are ever and again looming up in new fields. During the generations since 1798 the fame of Wordsworth has risen and fallen with tidal movements, some quite independent of the merits of his poetry. The large mass of his work has doubtless had relatively fewer readers in each generation since 1820, and yet there is an irreducible minimum of his poems that still does not pass into the limbo of the shelves along with Young and Akenside.

So much of Wordsworth's poetry springs from the out-of-doors, from fields, brooks, flocks, and mountains—has its inner inspiration so directly from objects in nature—that to understand its maker well one must begin by knowing about the country where he lived nearly all his life. He was born at the western edge of the north-western county in England. It is a region as far north as the southern parts of Alaska and Hudson's Bay, a country of long winter nights and long summer days, made comparatively warm by the Gulf Stream. There Nature is exceedingly busy. The western winds bring rain and snow, the streams are full and loud, the hills and mountains are green to the tops. The forces of sunshine, frost, rain, and snow are ever active, the wearing of the streams goes on apace, and new life is ever springing from rocks and soil. Every square foot of earth seems covered with

vegetation, molding, softening, active in healing the wounds that man has made.

Nature there is benevolent—not merciless as in the far north, or luxuriant as in the tropics, not swift and capricious as in the desert, but patient, kindly, working with and for man. In such a country man may and must, if he succeed, take Nature as his partner, working with her in planting and harvest and tending of flocks; and if he so works with Nature he is pretty sure of food, clothing, and shelter. Thousands who have seen the "Lake Country," as this part of England is called, have felt its buoyant beauty; hundreds have realized in some degree its benign spirit.

The people of this northwestern country have for several centuries been especially self-reliant and intelligent. Many generations ago, during the border wars between England and Scotland, it was the policy of the great landlords, especially of the Church, which owned wide tracts, to encourage in this region an independent and hardy yeomanry who could be relied upon as a bulwark in time of border war. The farmers were therefore granted and sold the land on which they lived, to improve and hand down to their children. There was thus developed an independent, self-respecting body of citizens owning their farms. This ownership sharpened their intelligence and initiative, for it made them in time free from landlords and lessened that servile attitude usual in people closely dependent upon a landed gentry. In the country where Wordsworth grew up there was little of showy aristocracy, little hopeless degradation, much of honest, toiling poverty.

But though poor, men lived hopeful, wholesome lives. Their moral plane was generally high; they were sober and thoughtful, in touch with things that endure. In such surroundings Wordsworth grew early into contact with

two great spheres of human interest—nature and man; and he saw them from his infancy in stimulating and favorable aspects—nature benignant, man aspiring. It was to this country that he returned a man of thirty, after some of the bitterest disappointments a sensitive man can undergo, to live a full half century more, always with man and nature foremost in his sight.

Wordsworth was born in the small town of Cockermouth, Cumberland, not far from the Irish Sea, on April 7, 1770. His father was a lawyer, who acted as agent for a gentleman, Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale, a man of great wealth but of doubtful integrity. The Wordsworth family had been settled in the northern counties of England for some generations. They belonged to the middle class of people of small estates, farmers and professional men, who may at any time, according to English conventions, aspire to become educated, make for themselves a career, and, if they acquire money, work themselves or their children into the ranks of the aristocracy. Wordsworth's mother came from a family of much the same rank as his father's—one that sometimes engaged in trade in a small way. On both sides, then, Wordsworth's ancestry was in the class of people who depend upon abilities of mind rather more than upon strength of body for support, and who may aspire to a career. Wordsworth never forgot, despite his democratic instincts, that he was a "gentleman."

The Wordsworth home was situated in a large, handsome house on the principal street of Cockermouth, with a wall and a garden in front, and a rear terraced garden that led down to the River Derwent. Across the stream were the picturesque ruins of Cockermouth Castle. Here the five children grew up in the most wholesome way imaginable. Sometimes, Wordsworth says, like the Indian,

he "made one long bathing of a summer's day." William was the second son, Dorothy was next in age, and there were two younger brothers. In these quiet surroundings Wordsworth lived for the first eight years of his life, until his mother died. Then, according to a custom rather common in England in like circumstances, the older boys were sent away to school.

Twenty-five miles to the south across the hills, at Hawkshead in Westmoreland, there was a little grammar school founded two centuries before to train boys for the universities. The school building—still in use for its original purpose—is a plain structure of about twenty-five by thirty feet, laid up from the rough slate stone of the region, with quarters above for the master and his family. Close at hand is an ancient church; the rest of the village, which had grown up where three roads met, was made up then, much as now, of the cottages of the farmers who worked the fields round about. Through the village ran the brook, covered mostly where it passed under houses and yards, but open here and there as a convenient water supply. Here Wordsworth spent the next eight years of his life. He had a small room at the house of Dame Tyson, who furnished him the homely but wholesome fare of the village and attended to his clothes. When vacations came, horses were sent from Cockermouth, and he and his brother Richard, who sometimes was at school with him, spent their holidays at the old home.

These eight years at the Hawkshead school were the happiest of Wordsworth's life. He refers to them in his poems again and again and always with a keen sense of pleasure. They deepened his affection for nature, strengthened his self-reliance, and confirmed a habit of natural attention to the inner meaning of things he saw and heard. The boys' school hours—and they were long—were spent

on Latin, Greek, and mathematics, but all the lessons were prepared at school, and the days of spring and autumn gave hours of margin for hunting, nutting, trapping, and sometimes such more venturesome sports as gathering eagles' eggs from the crags; and in Wordsworth's case for reading, and for active thinking about what he saw and felt. The English lakes lay all around, making the country one of rare beauty, one that was even then beginning to draw visitors, and now attracts them by the thousands from all parts of the world. The boys in the school were much upon a level, equally scant of pocket money, and were wont to hoard their shillings for weeks at a time for the sake of a feast of strawberry tarts at an inn at Lake Windermere, a mile or two away, or to spend a half year's allowance in a grand excursion to Furness Abbey, where they raced their horses on the sands left bare by the tide.

At length Wordsworth was fitted for the university, and in the autumn of 1787 he set out by stagecoach for Cambridge, dressed for the first time in the clothes of fashion. Cambridge in no sense dazzled him, nor was his course there marked by prominence in any way. He attended lectures, passed his examinations, and for the most part conducted himself soberly. The one exception was when, with students gathered in Milton's old chambers at Christ's College to celebrate the famous poet's birthday, he drank so many times to the memory of the famous departed that for the first and only time in his life he became drunk, and, realizing the fact, fled running to his rooms at St. John's across the town. At Cambridge Wordsworth read much, but did not exert himself. Because he disliked the higher mathematics he did not "go in for honors" and thus put himself in the way of securing a fellowship after graduation. Moreover, instead of plung-

ing into his books during the last long vacation as serious students did, and preparing for final examinations, he set out with Robert Jones, a college friend, for a walking tour upon the Continent.

It was in the summer of 1790. The young collegians landed at Calais and set off on their adventure across France. The French people were in a state of buoyant enthusiasm in their newly-won independence from aristocracy. They had humbled the monarchy, formed for themselves a new constitution, and were rejoicing in their rights as free men. Liberty, fraternity, and equality—abstractions that had served as the battle-cry of revolution—now indeed seemed to be taking concrete shape from what had been an iridescent dream. The English boys, coming from a land where liberty had for centuries been a fact, were welcomed to the feasts of the villagers celebrating the first anniversary of their freedom. Their hearts were stirred in sympathy with the rejoicing of the people in the new-born republic; they walked on through villages decorated with arches and hung with garlands. Crossing the Alps, they journeyed for a short distance into Italy, then turned back, reached the Rhine at Basle, bought a boat and floated downstream, finally walking to Calais.

But the home-coming was not joyous to Wordsworth. In fact he now had no home, for his father had died when William was at Hawkshead, and the children had been scattered. Dorothy, his only sister and the one person who sympathized with him and understood him, was now living with an uncle in Norfolk, the Reverend William Cookson. The Wordsworth uncles administering the estate of the orphans, who had been supplying William with funds for his education until his inheritance should be settled, looked upon the young man as a black sheep. He had won no university honors as he might easily have done, and honors

might have gained him a fellowship; in their view he had thrown away his time. Wordsworth went back to Cambridge and took his degree in the following January, but it brought him no employment or recognition. The relatives urged upon him the law or the church, but he could bring his mind to neither. In literature lay his line of least resistance, and thus far his most congenial occupation; he had read widely though not systematically while at Cambridge, and now he proposed to become a student of languages. His uncles rather grudgingly advanced him funds once more, and he set out again, in November, 1791, this time for Orleans, France, to perfect himself in French. Thus equipped he might become a traveling tutor and enlarge his acquaintance with languages.

The second and darker phase of the Revolution was now in progress. As a young Englishman, Wordsworth had entertainment in the homes of intelligent French people, both liberals who would hold what they had already won and insist on further progress, and reactionaries who only awaited the intervention of foreign powers to aid them in restoring the monarchy and the aristocracy to their ancient privileges. His sympathies, as might be expected of any generous-minded young Englishman of his training, went more and more with the moderate section of the revolutionary party, so that at the end of his year's sojourn he was almost on the point of joining actively that section of the revolutionists. Just then his uncles, hearing of his tendencies, threatened to cut off his allowance if he did not come home.

With Wordsworth's stay in France is connected his most unfortunate personal experience, which has only within two years come fully into light through documents found in London and in France by Professor Harper and by Professor Émile Legouis. While at Orleans Wordsworth

formed an intimacy with Annette Vallon, a young woman of good family and about four years older than he. To them a daughter, Caroline, was born in 1792. Though it is impossible from this distance in time to know the circumstances fully, it would seem that an immediate marriage was refused by Annette's family because Wordsworth was without any means for supporting a wife, and because he was a republican and they were royalists. There is no doubt that Wordsworth intended to marry Annette, and that his uncles refused any means to this end. For ten years he and his confidante, Dorothy, kept up such correspondence with her as the perturbed state of two nations at war would permit. There is reason for believing that once Wordsworth risked his life in a visit to Annette during the Reign of Terror. But as the years passed, it probably became plain to both that marriage was not the way out. In 1802 Wordsworth and Dorothy journeyed to Calais and spent a month there in daily visits with Annette and her daughter. The preceding ten years had been full of excitement for Annette, active in one political intrigue after another for the restoration of the ancient monarchy. Her brother had barely escaped the guillotine. Her own hazardous experiences had given her a reputation among her party friends as a woman of courage and spirit. As Professor Legouis points out, to forsake these for a life among the mists of Westmoreland as wife of a poet whose language she could neither read nor understand was probably unthinkable to her; and Wordsworth, retired among his native mountains, could well question the benefit to either of them of a belated marriage. They parted in friendship; for, although Wordsworth was married some three months after the weeks he spent at Calais, the correspondence between Dorothy and Annette ran on for a number of years, as the alternation

of war and peace between France and England allowed.

Such are the superficial facts; a few plain inferences follow. We now can see that it was not alone his radicalism that made Wordsworth all but an outcast from his family when he returned from France in 1792. His wandering during the next five years, his irresolution, his inability to settle down to work were caused, as it is now apparent, not solely by grief for the fate of democracy when he saw the struggle lost in France. He had a personal problem that was consuming him inwardly.

The workings of Wordsworth's mind during these years are better handled by the observer of mental and moral phenomena than the writer of a brief biographical sketch. It seems probable that Wordsworth turned from the whole experience with a moral recoil enforced by an inherently strong will. He thought that the secret was fairly secure. Relying upon this supposition, he was so unwise as to express great repugnance against Byron and others because of their immoral lives. No doubt Wordsworth felt that there was a vast difference between this episode and the notorious and ostentatious looseness of Byron's career. There was a difference and it was greatly in Wordsworth's favor; though some of his apologists do not entirely free him from the charge of hypocrisy.

In the years that have passed since these unfortunate events of Wordsworth's youth began to unfold to the public gaze, the question has been an open one whether, after Wordsworth and Annette decided to give up all thought of marriage, Wordsworth provided in any way for Caroline's welfare. She was married in 1816 to M. Baudouin, a civil employee of the French government. At that time Dorothy in a letter to a friend expressed a wish to add to her "niece's wedding portion." Although M. Legouis has been of the opinion that Dorothy's desire was not fulfilled,

abundant proof has now been found that Caroline, from the time of her marriage, or possibly beginning just before her marriage, received for nearly twenty years a substantial annuity from her father.

One of the most intimate and helpful friends of the Wordsworth family was Henry Crabb Robinson. He was a man of wealth and leisure, widely traveled, a genial companion and a voluminous and painstaking diarist. He delighted in the company of writers and artists and could meet on common ground men of a wide variety of interests. He was the good cheer of any social group, and his annual visits to the Wordsworths at Rydal Mount were eagerly cherished; for no Christmas was quite complete without his company. His diary of thirty-five volumes, though still mostly in manuscript, has now fully yielded its evidence concerning Wordsworth's provision for his daughter.[1]

It appears that Robinson was the usual agent entrusted to forward or convey the annuity of £30 from Wordsworth to his daughter. It would appear, also, that about 1835 the Baudouins, very likely supposing that a man of Wordsworth's fame at that time would be wealthy, became dissatisfied with the annual sum. Wordsworth, on his part, could at this same time ill afford to continue the payments. He had reached the age of sixty-five. His daughter Dora was in failing health, his sister Dorothy was a constant care, and his own income was uncertain. M. Baudouin seemed disposed to press the claim of his family by some means, very likely by publishing an account of the case. Perhaps the inability of Dorothy, in her physical and mental breakdown, to keep up the correspondence had led to misunderstanding and friction; for apparently direct communication between Wordsworth and his daughter's family had

[1] See *The* [London] *Times Literary Supplement*, September 5, 1929, and April 3, 17, 1930.

by this time ceased. At all events, Wordsworth, naturally unwilling to leave the matter for final adjustment by his own heirs and executors, negotiated through Robinson a final settlement of £400, and the Baudouins released him from all future responsibility.

It seems, then, that Wordsworth gave a total of about £1000 toward Caroline's maintenance after her marriage, a large sum for a man of his modest means and large family obligations. The final settlement alone of more than ten thousand francs would be reckoned, for that time and in the middle-class society into which Caroline had married, a handsome endowment. Nothing has come to light thus far to show whether the Baudouins were wholly satisfied with the settlement; but documents of the family indicate that the French descendants of Wordsworth were proud to be of the lineage of one of the greatest among the English romantic poets.

Unfortunate as the whole episode was, it reveals, perhaps better than any other series of events in his life, Wordsworth's acceptance of responsibility for wrong-doing, his good sense, his adherence to duty, his sense of justice. He gave his name to his daughter at her baptism and confirmed it in his formal legal consent to her marriage; he contributed largely to her support; he visited her with his wife as circumstances permitted, and he was on friendly terms with her family for some years following her marriage.

Wordsworth, as we saw, returned to England late in 1792 or early in 1793 more than ever in disgrace with his relatives except Dorothy. For more than two years he did not see her, for he was unwelcome at the Cookson home. He wrote some poetry, published his *Evening Walk* and his *Descriptive Sketches,* made long walking tours up and down and across England and Wales, sometimes staying

with distant relatives; he wrote articles for newspapers, and meditated a career in journalism, but was always unsettled. At length, in 1795, he spent some months caring for Raisley Calvert, the dying brother of a friend. This young man became greatly interested in Wordsworth, believed that he had great things within him if he could be free to work them out, and when he died left him nine hundred pounds.

Nothing could have been more fortunate than this gift. Wordsworth's peculiar genius could not work under the restraint of urgency. Earning his living by an occupation that could not arouse all his enthusiasm would altogether have stifled his genius. He could not, like Arnold, do two things at once. He needed leisure for untroubled thought and meditation. For years past he and Dorothy had cherished the hope that they might have a home together. Living costs in England were then low. The nine hundred pounds at the current rate of interest—much of it was invested at nine per cent—was enough to furnish the bare necessities for two people. Therefore during the month of October, 1795, the brother and sister established a home, which was not broken up until the death of Wordsworth, fifty-four years later. For five years they wandered a good deal. They lived first in the south of England in Dorset, then moved to Somersetshire to be near Coleridge, whose acquaintance they had formed. Here, at Alfoxden, a country estate vacant until its young heir should return from his travels, they lived most happily for a year, walking back and forth almost daily or several times a week the three or four miles that separated them from Coleridge, wandering in the moonlight along the roads and bypaths, conversing, writing, dining, and journeying at all hours of the day or night in a kind of mild bohemianism that suited the temper of all three. To Dorothy Wordsworth,

free to live her own life after an unhappy girlhood and a most constraining youth, these months were of unmeasured joy and vitality. It was during these months that Wordsworth and Coleridge collaborated in writing the *Lyrical Ballads*, which were brought out in the neighboring city of Bristol, 1798.

The following winter all three spent in Germany studying the language, the Wordsworths staying apart from Coleridge, so that they might learn the language the faster. Then, in 1799, after more journeying afoot in England, Wordsworth and his sister settled at Grasmere, Westmoreland, in the center of the Lake District, leased a cottage, and in December took possession. They never afterwards lived permanently outside the immediate neighborhood.

Dorothy Wordsworth's journals kept at intervals during the first few years of their stay at Grasmere picture the life most faithfully and interestingly. Their little dwelling, Dove Cottage, had formerly been a roadside inn with the sign of the Dove and Olive Branch. It was of plain rough stone, with four or five rooms. A few rods of ground on the rocky mountain side in the rear they subdued into a garden, and with the utmost frugality they made their small income meet their expenses. Dorothy cooked, mended, sometimes made her shoes. William caught fish for the table; both worked in the garden, planted vines, and brought flowers and plants from far and near to beautify the cottage. They gathered into their lives all the joy and beauty of that fascinating region. The sister's journal is one of the most charming and intimate documents connected with the making of English poetry.

A fact that becomes more and more impressive with each contact one makes with the Wordsworths is Dorothy's devotion to her brother. She lived in and for him. Every

ambition that she may ever have had, every feeling, every desire, she sacrificed to him and his purposes. She was his housekeeper, his secretary, the guardian of his health, his critic, the sharer in every emotion and imagination that passed through his being. She walked with him, observed with and for him, guarded him from annoyance, lived only for his welfare. Without her, apparently, Wordsworth's genius would not have put forth its finest flower.

The life at Dove Cottage was one of "plain living and high thinking" indeed. A few extracts from Dorothy's journal, including days when John Wordsworth, Mary Hutchinson, and Coleridge were visitors, will show that:

Wednesday, 13th June [1800.] . . . Wm. and John went to the pike floats. They brought in two pikes. I sowed kidney beans and spinnach [sic.] . . . I weeded a little. Did not walk.

Thursday [31st July, 1800.] . . . All the morning I was busy copying poems. Gathered peas, and in the afternoon Coleridge came. He brought the 2d volume of Anthology.[1] The men went to bathe, and we afterwards sailed down to Loughrigg. Read poems on the water, and let the boat take its own course. We walked a long time on Loughrigg. I returned in the gray twilight. The moon was just setting as we reached home.

Friday, 1st August.—In the morning I copied "The Brothers." Coleridge and Wm. went down to the lake. They returned, and we all went together to Mary Point, where we sat in the breeze, and the shade, and read Wm.'s poems. Altered "The Whirlblast," etc. We drank tea in the orchard.

Sunday, 31st [August, 1800.] . . . At 11 o'clock Coleridge came, when I was walking in the still, clear moonshine in the garden. He came over Helvellyn. Wm. was gone to bed, and John also, worn out with his ride round Coniston. We sat and chatted till half-past three, . . . Coleridge reading a part of "Christabel." Talked much of the mountains, etc., etc. . . . .

Tuesday, 24th. [November, 1801.] . . . We sat by the fire without work for some time, then Mary read a poem of Daniel . . . Wm. read Spenser, now and then, a little aloud to us. We were making his waistcoat . . .

It will be seen that no "joyless forms" regulated their "living calendar" and that each day took its temper from

1. Southey's *Annual Anthology,* Volume II.

their own impulses. Of course the life was not all idyllic. Wordsworth was not wholly well. Though naturally gifted with strength and endurance, he was nervous and sensitive, and spent an immense amount of mental energy upon his poetical composition, which often made him ill.

> Friday, 7th May [1802.]—William had slept uncommonly well, so, feeling himself strong, he fell to work at "The Leach Gatherer";[1] he wrote hard at it till dinner time; then he gave over, tired to death . . . William went to bed tired with thinking about a poem.
>
> Sunday morning, 9th May [1802.]—The air considerably colder today, but the sun shone all day. William worked at "The Leach Gatherer" almost incessantly from morning till tea-time . . . I was oppressed and sick at heart, for he wearied himself to death. After tea he wrote two stanzas in the manner of Thomson's "Castle of Indolence," and was tired out . . .

Usually Wordsworth composed out of doors, pacing along some favorite walk in a grove or upon a terrace across the mountain-side. Loughrigg Terrace, the vantage point from which the picture facing page 190 is taken, is where hundreds of his lines were composed and recited to himself. Dorothy writes a friend, February 13, 1804:

> William, which is the best news I can tell you, is cheerfully engaged in composition . . . He is writing the poem on his own early life [*The Prelude*] . . . The weather . . . has been very wet in general. He takes out the umbrella, and I daresay stands stock-still under it, during many a rainy half-hour, in the middle of road or field! . . .

Afterwards he would go home and dictate his lines to Dorothy, his willing amanuensis. Then came revision and rewriting, over which he toiled mightily, apparently doing much of this with his own hand until the lines were in such condition that Mary and Dorothy had to come to the rescue and transcribe for days at a time, lest the verses should be lost altogether.

1. That is, "Resolution and Independence."

To live with a person of genius, even a great poet, is not always an easy task, and one that in the present case must have been at times a strain upon a housekeeper's patience:

> On Saturday, 30th [January, 1802], Wm. worked at "The Pedlar"[1] all the morning. He kept the dinner waiting till four o'clock. He was much tired . . .
>
> Friday, 12th [February, 1802] . . . we sat a long time with the windows unclosed, and almost finished writing "The Pedlar"; but poor Wm. wore himself out, and me out, with labor. We had an affecting conversation. Went to bed at 12 o'clock.

At another time William, Dorothy, and Mary Hutchinson, who is visiting her, set out upon the twelve-mile walk to Keswick. William is busy in composition and sits down upon a wall. The others walk on. When he overtakes them he discovers that he has lost his gloves. Later he leaves his Spenser by the roadside and Mary turns back and recovers it.

Wordsworth's marriage in the autumn of 1802 to Mary Hutchinson scarcely changed the nature of the Dove Cottage life. Dorothy and William had known Mary from childhood, she came from a family much like the Wordsworths in social experiences and background, and since the return of the Wordsworths from Germany the three had visited long at each other's homes. There is no doubt that Dorothy felt the deepest dread that marriage might make a rift between herself and William. But her fears were not realized. She went with William to his marriage, though she could not nerve herself to look upon the ceremony, and then the three came back together by chaise to Grasmere, where Mary devoted herself to her husband much as Dorothy had done. They all continued to live in conditions of the utmost understanding.

1. That is, *The Excursion.*

The experience was but an enlargement of the affections of all three.

It was these years of poverty, sacrifice, and sometimes privation that proved the most productive in the life of Wordsworth. He was steadily advancing. He was not yet acknowledged as having reached the highest level in English poetry that the century had attained—that tribute was yet to come; but he was doing the work upon which his later fame rested and will always rest. For some six years after his marriage he continued to live at Dove Cottage until his increasing family made his further stay there impossible. The little white wayside dwelling will always be associated with some of the finest and most enduring of Wordsworth's poems—"Michael," "Resolution and Independence," "The Solitary Reaper," "The Daffodils," "Character of the Happy Warrior," "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," many of his sonnets, and parts of *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*. This former roadside tavern, now one of the literary shrines of England, has been restored as nearly as possible to its condition during the days of the Wordsworths. Some of their simple furniture has found its way back to the house, the spring that Wordsworth dug still gives living water, and the garden blooms with the wild flowers that Dorothy and Mary planted. Unlike most literary shrines it is filled with the spirit that flows through the work done there, and the strong souls for which it was the habitation; and to the visitor who has felt their spirit touch his own it would scarcely seem strange to see the once living figures appear in the midst of the arbor they built and the blossoms they once tended.

The last half of Wordsworth's long life was comparatively uneventful. Soon after his marriage, the Words-

worth estate, consisting mostly of notes for money lent the Earl of Lonsdale by Wordsworth's father, had been settled through the payment of the debt by the earl's successor. William and Dorothy received no less than twelve hundred pounds each. A few years later, Wordsworth was appointed distributor of stamps for the county of Westmoreland, an office under the government. This office, the gift of Lord Lonsdale, was doubtless intended as reparation for the injury done the family by the former earl. The duties could be administered by deputy, and the increased income enabled the family to move to Rydal Mount, an estate about two miles away, toward Ambleside, which was the family home from 1813.

There is little of interest to tell concerning the outward events of Wordsworth's life after he moved from the wayside cottage to the gentleman's estate. His artistic development was now complete. His spiritual growth had reached its limit. Nevertheless we must remember that half of the whole mass of Wordsworth's poetry was written in these years, including *The Excursion,* his largest single work. He was continually writing, revising and rearranging his work for successive editions. Much of the work of this period is undistinguished or repeats only the message of the years he had left behind. Honors came in due time: he was made D.C.L. of Durham and of Oxford, and upon the death of Southey in 1843 he was created Poet Laureate. A civil pension of three hundred pounds was granted him. His home became a pilgrimage place for men of letters from all over the English-speaking world. Here he was visited by many distinguished Englishmen and by Hawthorne, Ticknor, Emerson, and other Americans. During middle and late life he spent a good deal of time in travel, for his friend Sir George Beaumont had left him one hundred pounds annually for this express

purpose. At Rydal Mount he died, ripe in years, on the twenty-third of April, 1850, and was carried to rest in the country churchyard at Grasmere close by the Rothay as it sweeps through the meadows on its short journey from the mountains to the sea.

It is rather unfortunate that the portraits of Wordsworth generally found in editions of his works are those of old age. They have prejudiced our estimate of him. Naturally they were taken after he had reached fame. They do not show him as he was when he wrote his finer poems, the dreamer of dreams, the seer of visions. We should be glad to know of his personal appearance during those fruitful middle years while he was still at Dove Cottage. Handsome, Wordsworth certainly was not. Not even Dorothy with all her devotion to her brother could maintain that. All who describe him speak of his irregular features, large nose, rather heavy eyes, and high forehead. The portrait in this volume is one of 1798, a drawing by William Shuter, and corresponds with descriptions of the poet at that time of life, both in feature and expression of personality. Years later, his rather stolid expression gave him, in the minds of many people, an air of brooding abstraction. He was tall and rather angular of frame. His movements and gestures seemed to indicate independence and self-will rather than grace and refinement. On the whole he seemed austere rather than dignified. His conversation was likely to become tiresome when he spoke of poetry and literature, but when he talked of objects in nature he was simple and animated. His voice, which was perhaps his most winning outward characteristic, was firm and deep, and he read his poems with a decidedly animated and vigorous expression that interpreted the emotion of the lines and seems to have made a lasting impression upon those who were privileged to hear him. Visitors who had the still

rarer fortune of a walk with him through the hills were impressed even to his last days with the sturdy sincerity of a nobly simple man happiest amid the mountains that may to all time be called his own.

II. Wordsworth's Art

More than we are likely to understand unless we can sympathetically place ourselves back in the atmosphere of a century and a quarter ago, Wordsworth was a very conscious worker who saw certain definite ends to be reached in poetry, and certain very definite means for reaching these ends. His best poetry seems so natural and inevitable in expression that it is hard for us today to realize that it was written with this purpose of reaching new goals by new paths.

At the very outset of his career as a writer of verse, to be sure, Wordsworth had no intent of working any innovation. He accepted the eighteenth-century poetry as it was. This poetry paid great attention to form. It was polished, glittering, scintillating. It could be admired for its skill, its brilliancy, its incisive exactness in epigrams. Its effect was to arouse admiration for the wit of the writer, for his mental adroitness. In the hands of men of vigor and imagination such as Pope, Johnson, Gray, Collins, and Goldsmith, it was generally admirable and often masterful. In the hands of men of small emotional vigor, it was artificial and insincere. Its most usual verse form was the heroic couplet, which Pope had brought to perfection and which he had given a definite, formulated code of structure. Its language was clogged with allusions. One of its obvious devices was personification which presented ideas both abstract and concrete in the guise of beautiful youths and maidens who floated through clouds of the poet's verbiage and of the reader's fancy. Such were

some of the marks of the eighteenth-century poetry at its worst; and we must remember that its worst results and not its triumphs were what Wordsworth finally set himself against.

For ten years after he began to write poetry, however, he followed this prevailing eighteenth-century manner, with Pope for his model. Describing his own youthful feelings he says in "An Evening Walk," 1793:

> When linked with thoughtless Mirth I coursed the plain,
> And hope itself was all I knew of pain.
> For then, even then, the little heart would beat
> At times, while young Content forsook her seat,
> And wild Impatience, panting upward, showed
> Where tipped with gold the mountain-summits glowed.
> Alas! the idle tale of man is found
> Depicted in the dial's moral round;
> With Hope Reflection blends her social rays
> To gild the total tablet of his days;
> Yet still, the sport of some malignant power,
> He knows but from its shade the present hour.

As yet he lacked great or interesting ideas. The *Descriptive Sketches,* also published in 1793, the result of his wanderings upon the Continent, often remind one of Goldsmith. Such selections as those to be found in the Appendix (pages 323-350), from the first edition of this poem, show the eighteenth-century mannerisms at their worst, and Wordsworth a painstaking follower of them.

Full of conventional moralizing, pseudo-poetic diction, indirectness, and the inflation of high-sounding and empty phrases, these first published works of Wordsworth are cold and vapid. In 1794 he completed, in Spenserian stanza, *Guilt and Sorrow,* not published until long after, and in the following two years composed a blank-verse tragedy, also not published for nearly half a century. The thought of these two shows growing maturity, but the artistic technique is quite commonplace. Such was the sum of

the first ten years of Wordsworth's career as a poet. One must search diligently in the work of this decade for the man who was to come.

It was in his twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh years that Wordsworth first revolted against all this conventionalism and began to write in a style of his own. It was then that he fell under the stimulating influence of Coleridge. The two young artists had much in common — the fervor of youth, idealism, the high purpose of making the world better, of raising in some way its level of joy, its moral and emotional effectiveness. They were to each other as fire and tow. Their art was poetry. They found it frigid, dead. What they wrote should be alive, should quicken the emotions. To this end they would, for one thing, cast out formal poetic diction. Under the spell of Rousseau as both of them were, they could well believe that a turn toward simplicity and primitiveness was a turn back toward the directness and sincerity of nature and toward the stimulation of the human emotions. They could also see that in a former day English poetry had been direct, sincere, emotional. With their theories as a foundation, with this old poetry more or less their model, and with their goal the quickening of human emotions, the young men set to work. Coleridge, years after, told the principles of their choice of subjects in his *Biographia Literaria* (Appendix, page 372), and Wordsworth's account is to be found in his own Preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (Appendix, page 351). Their poems were to be mostly narratives with a directness akin to the simple English and Scottish popular ballads of by-gone centuries, and they were also to have the lyric quality that would appeal to the heart. The title chosen for the volume, *Lyrical Ballads,* was therefore significant, and the year in which it appeared, 1798, fixed a milestone in the history of English literature.

In the brief Preface to this first edition appeared the following statement:

> The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure. Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will perhaps frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: . . . Readers of superior judgment may disapprove of the style in which many of these pieces are executed: it must be expected that many lines and phrases will not exactly suit their taste. It will perhaps appear to them that, wishing to avoid the prevalent fault of the day, the author has sometimes descended too low, and that many of his expressions are too familiar, and not of sufficient dignity.

Enthusiastically, gleefully, the young men had gone to their task and, through the kind offices of friends with means, had secured the publication of the anonymous volume at the nearest large town, Bristol. For some months the poems were supposed to be the work of Coleridge, since he was the better known of the two. Their work, like that of any artists who come before the public with a new form or a return to an old one, was not long in attracting attention. The public passed through the gallery of the exhibition, condemned, admired, praised, or hooted according as the pictures appealed to their individual tastes and prejudices. There was much to be admired, much to be condemned. The few, like the youthful De Quincey, who discerned with sympathy the spirit that underlay the work, were enthusiastic in praise. Those who saw only the well-intended but ludicrous things like "Simon Lee" and "The Idiot Boy" passed by with loud guffaws. None, however, of any intelligence, failed to perceive the rare quality of "Tintern Abbey," and most were disposed to give the innovators a fair field.

But the professional critics, who regarded themselves then even more than now the rightful guardians of taste,

fell eagerly upon their prey. Wordsworth, wholly wrapped up in the idea that the two had been pursuing, with a good deal of the reformer in him and something of the martyr, replied to the attacks of the enemy in 1800 in the now famous Preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (Appendix, page 351). Although Coleridge furnished ideas for this defense and defiance, the composition was wholly Wordsworth's; and since as the years passed he wrote more poetry and Coleridge less, he became the chief protagonist of the new "school" of poetry which soon came to be known as "The Lakers." They were not of "the town"; London was not their home, spiritual or physical.

This Preface is the first, and in its results has become the most influential article of nineteenth century English literary criticism. It fully sets forth the principles upon which the *Lyrical Ballads* were composed, and since Wordsworth's most characteristic poetry is formed upon these, we may regard it as his artistic creed. It concerns itself with a few basic ideas, somewhat modified from, and greatly enlarged beyond, those of the first Preface. The poems are set forth, he says,

> . . . as an experiment . . . to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a poet may rationally endeavor to impart. . . .

To understand what Wordsworth meant by "the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation," we need go no further than to consider the well-known lines,

> But she is in her grave, and, oh,
> The difference to me.

Such words and sentiments, simple and dignified and surcharged with emotion, one who listens may hear as the real language of even unlettered men. Of such expressions, metrically arranged, Wordsworth sought to make the body

of his verse. Moreover he sought, as he says in the Preface, to give things an "unusual aspect," and especially to represent them as they impress us when we are deeply moved. Such a poem as "The Two April Mornings" with its vividly suggested pictures of the clouds and of the

> blooming girl whose hair was wet
> With points of morning dew

and who so poignantly reminded Matthew of his dead child that he

> looked at her and looked again,
> And did not wish her mine

is a typical attempt in this direction. Such a poem as "I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud" proves Wordsworth right when he maintains that "the mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants." We can certainly feel the soundness of his principles in striving to make the feeling "give rise to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling." Careful judgment would indicate that to a high degree he carried these principles into his best poetry, that they are the principles of the best poetry today, and must remain true principles of art.

In details of workmanship Wordsworth's aim was, negatively, to use no personifications, no so-called poetic diction, and no worn-out phrases; and, positively, "to look steadily at the subject." Such have been the principles of the most effective poetry of the nineteenth century and such, somewhat rephrased, are the principles of the best twentieth-century poetry.

Whether Wordsworth followed his own precepts we can determine only by careful study. That he made a very earnest attempt to avoid "poetic diction" is seen in all his work for the first decade after 1798. That he sometimes fell into it, especially in his later work, can also be shown. That

he sometimes looked so steadily at his subject that he failed to see it in its true proportions and perspective we can see from reading such poems as "The Idiot Boy" (Appendix, page 331), and noting Coleridge's comments in the *Biographia Literaria.*

Whether Wordsworth was wholly right in thinking that high-mindedness is a characteristic of persons in the humbler strata of life and that it results mainly from the simplicity of their surroundings, are also matters of grave doubt. Probably he found what his theories made him wish to find. One must, however, remember the many instances in recent poetry in which characters of the same stratum of life that Wordsworth had in mind have successfully figured in the expression of fine emotions, before passing too severe a judgment on this article of the elder poet's esthetic faith.

It is for its lofty and penetrating definitions of poetry and its remarks upon poetry in general that the Preface will longest be remembered. To such conceptions of poetry as are there expressed must the art return again and again, no matter how far afield the vagaries of the human spirit may at times carry it. Poetry, Wordsworth describes as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquillity," and has for its object "truth carried alive into the heart by passion." It is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science [knowledge]." Such estimates of poetry as these and the eloquence with which he supported them show that to Wordsworth the art was no avocation; its practice to him was a sacred office of the highest importance in the spiritual economy of humankind.

The Preface did not go unchallenged. The more Wordsworth defended himself, the more he was ridiculed; and

the more tenaciously in turn did he hold to his position. Byron, who disliked him intensely, probably expressed the feeling of the majority of Wordsworth's artistic detractors in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,* 1809:

> Next comes the dull disciple of thy school,
> That mild apostate from poetic rule,
> The simple Wordsworth, framer of a lay
> As soft as evening in his favorite May,
> Who warns his friend "to shake off toil and trouble,
> And quit his books, for fear of growing double";
> Who, both by precept and example, shows
> That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose;
> Convincing all, by demonstration plain,
> Poetic souls delight in prose insane;
> And Christmas stories tortured into rime
> Contain the essence of the true sublime.
> Thus, when he tells the tale of Betty Foy,
> The idiot mother of "an idiot boy";
> A moon-struck, silly lad, who lost his way,
> And, like his bard, confounded night with day;
> So close on each pathetic part he dwells,
> And each adventure so sublimely tells,
> That all who view the "idiot in his glory"
> Conceive the bard the hero of the story.

What, in the large, did Wordsworth make of his principles, right and wrong? Simplicity is one of the key ideas; did he succeed in applying this idea? First, we may inquire about the subjects themselves. "Lucy Gray" (page 69) and "Alice Fell" (page 344) both present simple subjects; both stories belong to the same stratum of society, and present a unit of human experience with a beginning, a middle, and an end; and both present circumstances which arouse our sympathy and our sense of the pathetic in human experience. Yet we know that one poem succeeds and the other fails largely because one series of facts is made to appeal to the imagination and the other is not. So, also with "Michael" (page 88) and with "The Idiot Boy" (page 331). Both are equally from life, and the facts in each set of circumstances show the force of parental affection.

Yet one story can be made into a poem, the other cannot. Wordsworth, then, was not always discriminating in choosing, within the realm of simplicity of life, those subjects that might be successfully used in art.

When we inquire of his success in simplicity of diction we reach much the same conclusion. In such lyrics as "Lines Written in Early Spring" the success of the simple, homely words in reaching the feelings is beyond question. But in "Simon Lee" the simplicity of diction produces merely the effect of flatness and childishness. When writing by his own theories of what poetic diction ought to be he often fails; when thinking and feeling "in the spirit of human passion" he uses any word fitting to the subject, relying on his own subconscious sense of what is fresh and sincere. Such passages are usually in the simple diction of common speech, but are now and then the matrix of a phrase of far other lineage. "Rolled round in earth's diurnal course" is not of the diction that springs spontaneously from the sheep-walks of Westmoreland. It seems, then, that Wordsworth applied too mechanically his principle of simplicity, and in many cases failed, just through using it, to reach worthy results. It is only just to say, however, that many poems that fail, as poetry, had to Wordsworth a psychological or spiritual significance such as he succeeds in expressing in "Lines Written in Early Spring."

Wordsworth's greatest fault as an artist was his lack of the self-critical faculty. Apparently he had no sure instinct that might direct him in the choice of subject, no objective judgment that could pass upon his own work. Some have disposed easily of this deficiency in his make-up by ascribing it to lack of humor. Certainly he lacked humor; the way of reformers through the ages has not been crowded with humorists.

When all destructive criticism has been pronounced and all his failures have been acknowledged, it is seen that Wordsworth's theories were, for his own day at least, substantially sound and dazzlingly new. They were on the side of truth and in the direction that poetry must then proceed if it were to advance at all. To him must very largely be credited the impetus that directed nineteenth-century English poetry into the line of its great achievements. In bringing back simplicity and real emotion into English poetry, after a long exile, he was doing it the greatest service that might be rendered. To find fifteen years of English poetry so torpid as those of Wordsworth's youth one must go back to times before the Armada. Gray was dead and Burns had not yet spoken. A few empty versifiers reveling in hollow phraseology that had long ceased to stand for any vital feeling continued the old tradition. To Wordsworth there was one thing to do: rid poetry of its incubus of conventional subjects and exotic verbiage and let the breath and language of passion have their way. The success of the poems of the "Lucy" group and of such nature lyrics as "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is enough to make the fame of any poet. In his search for a new poetry he carried home much rubble from the roadside, but such jewels as these show that the search was not in vain. There is nothing in his career to show that except in pursuit of his theories he would ever have greatly enriched the treasury of English poetry. These theories stimulated him to write; they did not inhibit his imagination. Coleridge might well "reflect with delight, how little a mere theory, though of his own workmanship, interferes with the processes of genuine imagination in a man of true poetic genius, who possesses, as Mr. Wordsworth, if ever man did, most assuredly does possess,

The vision and the faculty divine."

This vision and this faculty were indeed his at times; and at such times he rises above mere details and theories of art into the realm of the universal. No one can fail to find them in "Tintern Abbey," which ascends into the majesty of the grand style culminating in the great climax beginning

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns. . . .

It is the spirit of the great odes. Furthermore it is seen in those startling phrases that at times strike out, from even his pedestrian verse, "Gleams like the flashing of a shield."

Furthermore, Wordsworth, though usually diffuse, had often the artist's power of condensation. He used the sonnet form as none had used it since the time of Milton, with a solidity and richness of spirit worthy of the master workman. Often he shows a brief aptness of phrase that takes the form of epigrammatic characterization, as of Milton,

Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart;

or of Newton, whose statue as Wordsworth could see it from his lodgings at St. John's, expressed to him the mind and soul of one

Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

Such dignity and ampleness combined with directness and restraint are vouchsafed only to the supreme ones among poets. It was this gift of seizing and fixing forever the poignant intensity of the moment that makes Wordsworth stand apart. Whether the moment were one of political crisis, or personal grief, or of intense and formative joy that burst upon him direct from nature, he again and again strikes the happy note whose vibrations endure.

III. Wordsworth's "Philosophy" and Spiritual Development

Wordsworth derived his power over poetic substance from an original and independent mind and a deeply spiritual nature. The subjects of his poetry were taken from what lay nearest him; his artistic purpose was to use language so that it might reach the emotions; his total purpose was to minister to the affections of man and through these build up his spirit. First and last, this was his appeal.

In spiritual nature and experience Wordsworth was a mystic. That is, he was one who felt within himself a power for reaching final truth directly and not through the ordinary routine of religious and philosophical education or experience. This fact of his being a mystic might raise a bar between Wordsworth and us if his mysticism had been as remote from "the light of common day" as that of such a mystic as the poet Blake or the religious writer Swedenborg. But even though a mystic, he had so strong a hold upon material things that he was not swept into the realm of the unseen; we can reasonably understand him and follow him as far as he goes along the mystic way.

The root of his mysticism was a strong faith that the divine in nature and the divine that he felt in his own soul were one and the same. He also had the feeling that the divine spirit inherent in created things many times admonished him and otherwise influenced him and controlled him, just as a friend or one's own conscience may influence one. This was not a theory worked out late in life, but an intuition present from early childhood. Nature spoke to him "rememberable things." He says,

> Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
> Fostered alike by beauty and by fear.

Beauty was his inspiration, the force that urged him forward. Fear held him in check, for he felt when he had done something wrong that the elements themselves reproved him. Once, for example, he took without permission a boat and rowed out at night upon the lake. All nature seemed to reprove him. A peak reared up between him and the stars; and the horizon strode after him, and for days there hung over his mind a darkness, a solitude, a blank desertion. As he thinks of these things afterwards he is thankful that as a child he was influenced

> Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
> But with high objects, with enduring things—

purifying, sanctifying, and leading him along the path of abiding truth.

> I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
> Old as creation, drinking in a pure
> Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
> Of curling mist, or from the level plain
> Of waters colored by impending clouds.

He had, moreover, frequent mental and spiritual experiences such as come to few people, an obscure sense of "things forgotten" convincing him that he had had some previous soul existence. This consciousness of a past elsewhere is recorded in the great ode, "Intimations of Immortality," page 192. So strong was Wordsworth's sense, as a child, of the spiritual and unseen as the only things that were true, that he says that he sometimes on his way to school put out his hand to touch a rock or a tree to convince himself that the world about him was real. Through such mental and spiritual experiences he was convinced that the child is nearer to the divine heritage that every man possesses than is the mature man, and he felt that through the wholesome surroundings of his child-

hood, the solitudes of the moors, the beauty of the morning hills, he retained intercourse with divine truth.

> . . . . This infant sensibility,
> Great birthright of our being, was in me
> Augmented and sustained . . . .
> . . . . 'Twere long to tell
> What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,
> And what the summer shade, what day and night,
> Evening and morning, sleep and waking, thought
> From sources inexhaustible, poured forth
> To feed the spirit of religious love
> In which I walked with Nature. But let this
> Be not forgotten, that I still retained
> My first creative sensibility;
> That by the regular action of the world
> My soul was unsubdued.

Wordsworth's total account of his spiritual development from infancy shows a child of unusual natural sensitiveness who developed his own acuteness and intuition by brooding imagination, and brought them to a high degree of reality. Sometimes for months when occupied with study or other diversions these perceptions of his would lie dormant and then (as, for instance, when he returned to Hawkshead for the long vacation after a year at Cambridge), they all came back to him like "a returning spring," and once more he was reassured. This particular experience was one of the memorable crises of his life, perhaps the greatest inspirational crisis. He had passed all of the short summer night at a country dance. As he returned,

> Magnificent
> The morning rose, in memorable pomp,
> Glorious as e'er I had beheld—in front,
> The sea lay laughing at a distance; near,
> The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
> Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
> And in the meadows and the lower grounds

> Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—
> Dews, vapors, and the melody of birds,
> And laborers going forth to till the fields.
> Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim
> My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
> Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
> Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
> A dedicated spirit. On I walked
> In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

Through the magnificence that rose about him he had seen into the glory of God's earth, had felt himself part of it, had seen the unity of Creation, and in the silence had heard the call to the life of a poet who should interpret the divine emotion that then filled his soul. From this height of vision he was led forward a little way, and then he descended; ten years were to elapse before he again rose to the empyrean, or to any marked degree began to make good the hopes of that exalted moment.

But even during these ten years he was conscious that his own mind was growing into active harmony with nature and was interpreting to him more truthfully its phenomena, for

> An auxiliar light
> Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
> Bestowed new splendor . . . .
> and the midnight storm
> Grew darker in the presence of my eye.

At the base of his vision lay, in his youth, a passionate physical joy derived from mountain, lake, and stream. This is fully explained in "Tintern Abbey," where he advances also the idea that this phase of "vulgar joy" in nature was but a stage in his development toward the grasp of higher truths. Thus it came that, about the time when he was in Cambridge, he felt that he was mounting to "highest truth." He sensed the unity of created things:

> To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower,
> Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
> I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,
> Or linked them to some feeling; the great mass
> Lay bedded in a quickening soul . . .

Some might call it madness, he says, but to him it was "perpetual logic to my soul."

Thus far Wordsworth's soul had been filled with one interest, nature and its message to him. Man was in a secondary place, or occupied his mind only as an integral part of creation. Then the French Revolution came into his life. The movement did not stir him at once. Even when in the summer of 1790 he crossed France afoot, the current social crisis failed to reach his comprehension. The French people were only enjoying the freedom that the young collegian had always known. Why should they not be free? He was sympathetic, joined in their feasts, but he was not moved. When, eighteen months later, he returned to France and became really acquainted with French conditions, the Revolution was gaining in intensity. It was then, probably, that he studied Rousseau. It was then that he heard discussed for the first time the fundamental principles of all society, saw the dissolution of all fixed bonds of social organization, saw theorems, maxims, creeds, thrown together into the melting-pot of ideas. At first all was to him a weltering confusion, and then gradually a new shape rose to his vision: Man, not the child of nature, but the disinherited heir of all time, victim of institutions, of the organized tyranny of his fellow-man. Largely through conversation with Michael Beaupuy, the young Englishman saw the truth. Beaupuy—gentleman, aristocrat, officer in the army of the republic—had forsaken his hereditary social class and enlisted heart and fortune in the service of humanity. A few years later he was killed in battle. Through the eyes of his ripened experience

and his more balanced temperament Wordsworth saw common humanity in a new aspect. Another vision, a reality in sickening contrast with the exaltation of that glorious morning of his Hawkshead vacation, one day confronted him:

> And when we chanced
> One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,
> Who crept along fitting her languid gait
> Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord
> Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
> Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands
> Was busy knitting in a heartless mood
> Of solitude, and at the sight my friend
> In agitation said, "'Tis against *that*
> That we are fighting," I with him believed
> That a benignant spirit was abroad . . .

From that moment Wordsworth's interest in man never receded. During these months in France, and even after his return to England, his spirit was borne on the full tide of that generous enthusiasm of youth for the cause of humanity that can never come twice to a man:

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very Heaven!

The world seemed born again; all the diseases of society that follow tyranny and oppression seemed about to dwindle away in an era of universal justice.

Following this crest of highest optimism came five years of bitterest disillusionment, despair, and then slow recovery. The year 1793 had only begun when France and England were at war. As Wordsworth from the Isle of Wight watched the British fleet gathering to crush the republic that bore the hopes of all mankind, he was left in "conflict of emotions without name." Far from lifting his voice with praying congregations for the victory of his country in battle, he wished that it might suffer defeat. A few months went by and France was victorious. Still

victorious she pressed on to vengeance and to conquest. In dismay and revulsion of spirit Wordsworth watched the young republic mad with will to power as she grappled with the nations of Europe. Man the oppressed had become man the oppressor.

In this moment of bitter disillusionment appeared William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. To Wordsworth, as to thousands in England and upon the Continent, this book appeared almost as a revelation. Amid chaos and clamor of ideas it was a voice of calm. Clearly it summed up the causes and principles of revolution; and it offered a cure for political wrongs as well as a rule for moral conduct—human reason. Once more Wordsworth summoned his courage to reconsider in this new light problems that shortly before he had thought to be already on the way to solution. Confidently he embraced Godwin's views to the utmost; once more his hope rose. He dragged all "precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds" to the bar of reason. Whatever he should henceforth hold as truth should be established in his own mind by reason, and by reason alone. But like others he found that while reason led him toward a given proposition it also led him away from it. At length, "sick, wearied out with contrarieties" he "yielded up moral questions in despair," he dropped to the "soul's last and lowest ebb," "deeming our blessed reason of least use where wanted most."

Just how long the moral crisis of this depth lasted Wordsworth does not say. It may have been prolonged by his reading Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* just then published, and a probable acquaintance with the author; for Paine was in London at times when Wordsworth was there in the course of these years, intimate with the Godwin circle which was also frequented by Wordsworth. The Calvert legacy of 1795 fortunately brought Dorothy back

into his life; and their joy in each other's society, their books, their studies together, their housekeeping, awakened other interests. He also turned diligently to the study of mathematics and chemistry, the latter probably recommended by his friend Priestly, the discoverer of oxygen, and one of the advanced social thinkers of the day. Then came Coleridge, with his stimulating personality, teeming brain, and overflowing sympathy and companionship.

When Wordsworth once more turned to the problems that had led him to his deepest pessimism, his perturbed spirit had had opportunity for calm. He now approached them by his own paths, ways now somewhat overgrown, but firm in footing, for he had trodden them before. Logic and reason might lead where they would, but his own observation and his own experience had taught him that reason was not the basis of morality. Men whom he knew, untaught, unschooled—dalesmen, shepherds, villagers—formed a society of greater moral strength and effectiveness than any community basing its relationships upon the conclusions of science and absolute philosophy. With absolute certainty, also, he knew that what was best within himself came by intuition and sensitiveness to the teachings of nature, not from the intellect alone. Indeed, reason unaided was, he felt, one of the greatest hindrances to a spiritually effective life.

Thus at length past heights and depths of spiritual experience he arrived at full manhood with a message for mankind. It was a message of hope, and poetry must be its medium. He felt that he had tapped a new, primal source of spiritual power. Through this, mankind might be blessed with "joy in widest commonalty spread," a gift that might not be taken away. If men would lead lives of simple and pure trust, with Nature for their teacher, laying themselves open passively to her influence,

they would at length find themselves in the pathway that he had trod toward divine truth and joy. This is sometimes called Wordsworth's philosophy. It should not be called such, since it taught and professed no system. It was his own experience of life, and it has much in common with the experience of mystics in all ages of human history. It is this spirit that runs through "Lines Written in Early Spring," "To My Sister," and "Expostulation and Reply," and that culminates in "Tintern Abbey."

Wordsworth hoped that these spiritual experiences would expand in the direction of new and further truth. In this hope he wrote *The Prelude,* a review of his mental and spiritual growth thus far, expecting that, while recalling and re-living the experiences of youth, his spiritual life would assume a new growth into higher planes of development. This work of fourteen books and *The Excursion* of nine were to be parts of the only just begun *Recluse,* which should consist of the observations upon society of a man watching the current of humanity from a distance and furnishing its members with a means to cure its ills.

It would be interesting to discuss fully at this point the influence of Rousseau upon Wordsworth, and his indebtedness to that most influential of French thinkers. Among Rousseau's principal teachings were these: that civilization has corrupted morals, and that the greatest amount of human virtue is to be found among savages of the wilderness; that mankind was born free but finds itself everywhere in chains; that the best education is that which teaches least by precept and most by experience. Such views as these Wordsworth must have found congenial, for in general they corroborated his youthful observations and his maturing beliefs. There can be little doubt that Rousseau's principles strongly influenced the confirmation of Wordsworth's tenets until as late as 1810.

His would be a narrow nature indeed that could be unsympathetic with Wordsworth as he stood at the foot of the trail in 1798 girt for the adventure of life abundant. It is sad to feel that almost as soon as his message to the world was clear in his own heart, the visions that had illuminated his youth faded "into the light of common day." The failure of these spiritual perceptions is reflected in the "Intimations of Immortality." It is in general coincident with Wordsworth's great revulsion of spirit against the French Revolution. The conviction grew upon him that the atheistical philosophy dominant in France had caused the downfall of all high hopes, not only there, but for all the world. France, in seeking empire, had so aroused his bitterest contempt that Dorothy, writing in 1803 of her brother's enrolling for the military service when all the men of Grasmere Vale began to train, could say, "and surely there was never a more determined hater of the French, nor one more willing to do his utmost to destroy them if they really do come." His opinions had now swung him full circle into the ranks of British Torydom.

Wordsworth's more specific religious beliefs would form another topic of profitable inquiry. In his youth he followed the established creeds of his time. His experiences in France, both personal and political, the writings of Rousseau, Godwin, and Paine, and his subsequent questioning of all religious theory and practice had brought him to such a state of mind that Coleridge describes him in 1797 as "half atheist." From this situation Coleridge seems to have been a strong influence in bringing him back toward orthodox Christianity. Years afterwards, from 1813 on, he was a stanch and ever firmer supporter of the teachings and policy of the established Church of England.

There must always be something repulsive in the figure of Wordsworth as he settles down to middle and later life

a thoroughgoing conservative, against Catholic emancipation, against the Reform Bill, against the education of the masses, against admitting dissenters to Cambridge, against distributing Bibles too freely among the masses, and even lukewarm upon the principles that he had written into the celebrated preface.[1] Some of his contemporaries felt this, too. Byron, of course, so long as he lived lost no opportunity to jeer at the tightening opinions of the poet who held office in the "excise," as Byron perversely termed the stamp-distributing sinecure. We are inclined furtively to remember Browning's "Lost Leader" with a wish that Browning had issued no disclaimer of any intent really to satirize the laureate. But we must remember that Wordsworth's best work was done while the fire of youth was still in his veins. We must remember that from his spirit came forth the noblest sonnets in celebration of liberty in his century. We must also have the charity to believe that to each experience his spirit reacted sincerely. Even his horror at the Reform Bill was genuine. In each reaction he felt that he was "following the gleam." In looking back over his career we are aware of a soul that lived courageously, sought not easy things, but followed an inner leading, often when the way was hard, and sometimes when he had to make the road himself amid the ribald sneers of those who dared not follow.

We must be content to look on Wordsworth, then, as one who delivered his message before he reached middle life. It was in the enthusiasm of young manhood that he began his real poetical career in 1798. Those staid and settled in mind could not be expected to hear this message. It was the voice of what had come to him as child and boy, and forever remained the greatest possible stay and constructive force within him. Like Emerson's "Self-Reliance" it appealed to the eternal hope in the breast of

1. *Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, I, 518.

youth, and to the eternal confidence of youth in the reality of its own visions. When this passion had died in Wordsworth there had passed with it all that was distinctive and almost all that was of value in his ideals or his art. But his message will never fail, if put forth for what it actually is, to stir again and again that eternal faith in young men and women that the world of creation is as it should be, and that nature is to be trusted.

IV. Wordsworth and the Romantic Movement

The poetry of William Wordsworth is so closely connected with that attitude and manner of English literature during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries now known as the English Romantic Movement that it is necessary to get some idea of what this movement was. Roughly we may define it as an impulse, beginning about the time when Wordsworth was born, to express in literature more of emotion and of individuality than had been for upwards of a century the custom. In all art men express both intellect and emotion. For the three or four generations before Wordsworth, it had been the custom in English poetry to express the intellect and to repress the emotions. In the generations that have followed him it has been the custom to express the emotions more than the intellect. Wordsworth's life and activity fall just at the point of change, and he himself was so active in promoting the new order of expression that he is generally ranked as the outstanding figure in the advancement of English romanticism.

The opposition to romantic freedom of form and richness of personal feeling had begun long before Wordsworth's day. Modern English literature begins with Elizabeth, and in the early years of her reign individuality ran riot. Even toward the close of that day, however,

there came in, as literature became less spontaneous and more self-conscious, a sense that form should be more seriously attended to, and that English poetry and English drama should follow the manner of the ancient Greek and Roman poets. This idea grew, and with the return of the exiled court from France at the time of the Restoration in 1660 it became the law of poetic composition. The work of such influential men as Dryden, Pope, and Johnson, each overlapping his predecessor and emphasizing form and correctness, tended to curb and almost to obliterate the expression of pure emotion and to confine all kinds of poetry to one model.

So far had the poets of the eighteenth century gone toward the classic custom that they had adopted the phraseology, the situations, and the mythology of Greece and Rome as the correct and, indeed, the inevitable form of expression. The heroic, or closed, or decasyllabic couplet as it is variously called, the form of English verse that seemed to them best able to convey to their readers the spirit of classical poetry, became standardized, and to its pace marched the whole pantheon of pagan gods, goddesses, and demigods followed by trains of personified abstractions and by droves of shepherds and nymphs of classic names, all marshaled from the literature of two thousand years ago. Emotion cannot move freely in such artificiality of dress. Great poets may express themselves even with such machinery, but the smaller poets, mastering only the machinery, mistake this for inspiration; and such of their readers as value chiefly the machinery are likely to confuse the thrust of the mechanism with the pulsations of emotion.

The romantic movement threw itself against all this convention in literature. Indeed, there is plenty of evidence that the romantic never died entirely out of English

taste any more than it died out of English life. For generations it had been silenced and overlaid by a stratum of classical poetry, but the desire for the native element was implanted and often-recurring. It now asserted itself against the *caput mortuum* that the eighteenth century had made of its alien model. The men of the new day stood for the spirit of individual freedom in choice and treatment of subject, and for abundant expression of the emotions. More than this, they celebrated the spirit of faith in one's inner convictions, in intuitions, in the hidden and unseen forces that control the destiny of man. They preached the spirit of wonder, awe, and reverence toward phenomena in nature and in man. They delighted in such combinations of color and form as appear in the work of medieval artists. So great was this tendency that critics have sometimes called romanticism a return to the life and thought of the Middle Ages.

English romantic poetry cast off the pseudo-classic form of the heroic couplet as used by Pope and Dryden, substituting varied and supple stanzaic forms and blank verse; it also revived such medieval forms as the sonnet; in fact, it selected and invented the forms best suited for its use on any occasion. It attempted, moreover, to arouse the whole range of human emotions by any means, and did not discard appeal to the horrible, the occult, and the superstitious. The romantic has been defined as the spirit of "strangeness added to beauty." Professor Gummere felt it to be the "control and combination of the facts of life by imagination and hope."

Whatever definition may be formed for romanticism as applied to art or life, its spirit will be found permeating the work of Wordsworth. When he began writing, English poetry could develop no further in the manner in which it had been confined for the last century. It was root-bound

by the rules of pseudo-classic verse; it had extracted from the soil of classic tradition the last molecule of figure, ornament, and allusion. English poets were more familiar with Parnassus and the Elysian fields than with their own meadows and mountains. Gray felt this, and turned with avidity to the newly-found mythology of the Germanic peoples. Wordsworth, too, after ten years of undistinguished writing after classic models, and now set aglow by Coleridge's ardent enthusiasm, cast off the old shackles. The publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 is therefore taken as the visible landmark that shows the beginning of the English Romantic Movement.[1] The challenge cast before the public in this volume was quickly taken up and was defended in the Preface to the second edition.

This Preface with such vital definitions of poetry as we have already quoted was a new evaluation of the nature of poetry. It placed emotion and passion first, and made form completely subsidiary. From this Preface may be dated all that is vital in the romantic revolt against the classic. The battle continued until the new spirit had made for itself a permanent place in English poetry.

1. Students of Wordsworth cannot do better than to investigate the many definitions of romanticism, to find out something of its rise in Germany and France and the influence of English poetry upon the movement there, and to see how many of its aspects apply to the poetry of Wordsworth. A popular introduction to the subject is William Lyon Phelps's *English Romantic Movement*. Good also is C. H. Herford's *Introduction to the Age of Wordsworth*. Paul Elmer More's "The Drift of Romanticism," in *Shelburne Essays*, Series VIII, is a valuable contribution to the subject. A recent article of stimulating interest is Professor Arthur O. Lovejoy's "The Discrimination of Romanticisms," in *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, June, 1924.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

In a collection of books by and upon William Wordsworth the following will generally be found most useful: *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth,* 8 volumes; *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth,* 2 volumes; *The Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth,* 2 volumes; all edited by Professor William Knight (Macmillan).

Uniform with the above are published *Letters of the Wordsworth Family,* 3 volumes, also edited by Professor Knight (Ginn).

The *Journals* and the *Letters* are of the greatest interest, the *Journals* especially forming the most intimate and illuminating view of poetry in the making to be found in English literature.

Of single-volume texts, the most carefully edited is that of Mr. Thomas Hutchinson (the Oxford Press). This follows Wordsworth's own order of arrangement.

The Globe edition, with an introduction by John Morley, arranges the poems in chronological order and gives the complete text of *The Recluse,* 1888 (Macmillan).

Of selections from Wordsworth, the collection by Matthew Arnold (1879) for the *Golden Treasury Series* is skillfully chosen. Among carefully edited editions of selections, those of A. J. George, 1889 (D. C. Heath), Professor Edward Dowden (1897) for the *Athenaeum Press Series* (Ginn), and Mr. Stopford A. Brooke (1907), illustrated (Methuen, London), are noteworthy.

Of biographies, the *Memoirs of William Wordsworth,* by Bishop Christopher Wordsworth, the poet's nephew and literary executor, may be considered the authorized account of the poet's life. It devotes little space to Wordsworth's stormiest years. The *Life of William*

Wordsworth, by Professor Knight, 3 volumes, Edinburgh, 1889, is replete with extracts from the *Journals, Letters,* and other sources.

William Wordsworth, His Life, Works and Influence, by Professor George McLean Harper, 2 volumes, 1916 (Scribner's), is the most useful of the biographies in dealing with the first thirty years of Wordsworth's life.

The Early Life of William Wordsworth, 1770-1798, a scholarly study of Wordsworth's early years, is by Professor Émile Legouis. Second edition, 1921, with brief appendix (Dent, London).

Of the most recent studies in Wordsworth's life, the following are most profitable: by Professor Harper, *Wordsworth's French Daughter,* 1916 (Princeton Press); by Professor Legouis, (1) *William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon,* 1922 (Dent, London), the substance of which may also be found in an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* "Le Roman de William Wordsworth," Paris, April-May, 1922; (2) *Wordsworth in a New Light,* 1923 (Harvard University Press); (3) an article, "Nouveaux Renseignements sur Wordsworth et Annette Vallon," *Revue Anglo-Américaine,* Vol. I, No. 1, Paris, October, 1923, which is the latest word upon the subject.

Critical studies of Wordsworth are those of F. W. H. Myers (*English Men of Letters Series*) and Sir Walter A. Raleigh, *Wordsworth,* 1903 (Arnold, London).

Bibliographies are found in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth,* Volume VIII, cited above, and in the *Cambridge History of English Literature,* Volume XI.

Wordsworth and the English Lake Country, illustrated by Eric Robinson, 1911 (Appleton), is a book of decided charm.

To serious students of Wordsworth, Professor Lane Cooper's *A Concordance to the Poems of William Wordsworth* (Smith, Elder, London), is indispensable.

CHRONOLOGY

1770. William Wordsworth born, April 7, at Cockermouth, Cumberland.
1771. Dorothy Wordsworth born.
1772. Samuel Taylor Coleridge born.
1778. Wordsworth's mother dies; Wordsworth sent to Hawkshead school.
1783. Wordsworth's father dies.
1785. First verses of Wordsworth now known.
1787. Wordsworth at St. John's College, Cambridge.
1788. Long vacation at Hawkshead.
1790. Walking tour in Europe, with Robert Jones.
1791. Graduates, B.A. at Cambridge.
1791-2. About thirteen months in France at Paris, Orleans, and Blois.
1793. *Descriptive Sketches* and *An Evening Walk* published, London.
1795. Receives a legacy from Raisley Calvert, £900; probably first met Coleridge.
1795-7. At Racedown in Dorset; Dorothy with him.
1797-8. Alfoxden, Somersetshire; *Lyrical Ballads* published, Bristol, London.
1798-9. At Goslar, Germany; *The Prelude* begun.
1799. December 20, settled at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, Westmoreland.
1801. Second edition *Lyrical Ballads.*
1802. Third edition *Lyrical Ballads;* October 4, Wordsworth married Mary Hutchinson.
1803. William and Dorothy make a walking tour in the Highlands.

1813. Appointed Stamp Distributor for Westmoreland; settles finally at Rydal Mount.
1815. First collective edition of Wordsworth's poems.
1820. Second collective edition of Wordsworth's poems.
1827. Third collective edition of Wordsworth's poems.
1832. Fourth collective edition of Wordsworth's poems.
1837. Fifth collective edition of Wordsworth's poems.
1838. Degree of D.C.L., Durham.
1839. Degree of D.C.L., Oxford.
1842. Resigns Distributorship and accepts Civil List pension of £300.
1843. Becomes Poet Laureate after the death of Southey.
1850. April 23, died; buried at Grasmere Church.

WORDSWORTH

Matthew Arnold*

I remember hearing Lord Macaulay say, after Wordsworth's death, when subscriptions were being collected to found a memorial of him, that ten years earlier more money could have been raised in Cambridge alone, to do honor to Wordsworth, than was now raised all through the country. Lord Macaulay had, as we know, his own heightened and telling way of putting things, and we must always make allowance for it. But probably it is true that Wordsworth has never, either before or since, been so accepted and popular, so established in possession of the minds of all who profess to care for poetry, as he was between the years 1830 and 1840, and at Cambridge. From the very first, no doubt, he had his believers and witnesses. But I have myself heard him declare that, for he knew not how many years, his poetry had never brought him in enough to buy his shoestrings. The poetry-reading public was very slow to recognize him, and was very easily drawn away from him. Scott effaced him with this public, Byron effaced him.

The death of Byron seemed, however, to make an opening for Wordsworth. Scott, who had for

*For biographical note on Matthew Arnold see Appendix, page 397.

3. *memorial,* the memorial statue of Wordsworth by Frederick Thrupp in the baptistery of Westminster Abbey. Near it are busts of both Thomas Arnold and Matthew Arnold.

22. *Byron effaced him.* The romantic narrative poetry of Scott and Byron was much more popular in appeal than was the poetry of Wordsworth.

some time ceased to produce poetry himself, and stood before the public as a great novelist; Scott, too genuine himself not to feel the profound genuineness of Wordsworth, and with an instinctive recognition of his firm hold on nature and of his local truth, always admired him sincerely, and praised him generously. The influence of Coleridge upon young men of ability was then powerful, and was still gathering strength; this influence told entirely in favor of Wordsworth's poetry. Cambridge was a place where Coleridge's influence had great action, and where Wordsworth's poetry, therefore, flourished especially. But even amongst the general public its sale grew large, the eminence of its author was widely recognized, and Rydal Mount became an object of pilgrimage. I remember Wordsworth relating how one of the pilgrims, a clergyman, asked him if he had ever written anything besides the *Guide to the Lakes*. Yes, he answered modestly, he had written verses. Not every pilgrim was a reader, but the vogue was established, and the stream of pilgrims came.

Mr. Tennyson's decisive appearance dates from 1842. One cannot say that he effaced Words-

7. *Coleridge.* Coleridge's stimulating, optimistic thought and winning personality made him a constructive force in society, especially among the young. The poetry of all these men was contemporary with Wordsworth's.

19. *Guide,* etc., *A Guide through the District of the Lakes in the North of England, with a Description of the Scenery, etc., for the use of Tourists and Residents,* 1835. Much of the material in this guide had appeared before, accompanying selections from Wordsworth's poems or prose descriptions of the Lake Country by other persons. It was a popular book, reprinted in 1842 and 1849.

24. *1842.* Though Tennyson had published earlier books, his volume of 1842, including "Ulysses," "Locksley Hall," "Morte D'Arthur," and other poems of equal merit, showed to many of his friends the first positive proof of his high poetic ability.

worth as Scott and Byron had effaced him. The poetry of Wordsworth had been so long before the public, the suffrage of good judges was so steady and so strong in its favor, that by 1842 the verdict of posterity, one may almost say, had been already pronounced, and Wordsworth's English fame was secure. But the vogue, the ear and applause of the great body of poetry-readers, never quite thoroughly perhaps his, he gradually lost more and more, and Mr. Tennyson gained them. Mr. Tennyson drew to himself, and away from Wordsworth, the poetry-reading public and the new generations. Even in 1850, when Wordsworth died, this diminution of popularity was visible, and occasioned the remark of Lord Macaulay which I quoted at starting.

The diminution has continued. The influence of Coleridge has waned, and Wordsworth's poetry can no longer draw succor from this ally. The poetry has not, however, wanted eulogists; and it may be said to have brought its eulogists luck, for almost everyone who has praised Wordsworth's poetry has praised it well. But the public has remained cold, or, at least, undetermined. Even the abundance of Mr. Palgrave's fine and skillfully chosen specimens of Wordsworth, in the *Golden Treasury,* surprised many readers, and gave offense to not a few. To tenth-rate critics and compilers, for whom any violent shock to the public taste would be a temerity not to be risked, it is still quite permissible to speak of Wordsworth's poetry, not only with ignorance, but with impertinence. On the Continent he is almost unknown.

I cannot think, then, that Wordsworth has, up

to this time, at all obtained his desserts. "Glory," said M. Renan the other day, "glory, after all, is the thing which has the best chance of not being altogether vanity." Wordsworth was a homely man, and himself would certainly never have thought of talking of glory as that which, after all, has the best chance of not being altogether vanity. Yet we may well allow that few things are less vain than *real* glory. Let us conceive of the whole group of civilized nations as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working toward a common result; a confederation whose members have a due knowledge both of the past, out of which they all proceed, and of one another. This was the ideal of Goethe, and it is an ideal which will impose itself upon the thoughts of our modern societies more and more. Then to be recognized by the verdict of such a confederation as a master, or even as a seriously and eminently worthy workman, in one's own line of intellectual or spiritual activity, is indeed glory; a glory which it would be difficult to rate too highly. For what could be more beneficent, more salutary? The world is forwarded by having its attention fixed on the best things; and here is a tribunal, free from all suspicion of national and provincial partiality, putting a stamp on the best things, and recommending them for general honor and acceptance. A nation, again, is furthered by recognition of its real gifts

2. *Renan,* Ernest (1823-1892), a French writer of religious and secular history.

16. *Goethe,* Johann Wolfgang von (1749-1832), the foremost German man of letters of modern times, best known for his *Faust.*

and successes; it is encouraged to develop them further. And here is an honest verdict, telling us which of our supposed successes are really, in the judgment of the great impartial world, and not in our own private judgment only, successes, and which are not.

It is so easy to feel pride and satisfaction in one's own things, so hard to make sure that one is right in feeling it! We have a great empire. But so had Nebuchadnezzar. We extol the "unrivaled happiness" of our national civilization. But then comes a candid friend, and remarks that our upper class is materialized, our middle class vulgarized, and our lower class brutalized. We are proud of our painting, our music. But we find that in the judgment of other people our painting is questionable, and our music non-existent. We are proud of our men of science. And here it turns out that the world is with us; we find that in the judgment of other people, too, Newton among the dead, and Mr. Darwin among the living, hold as high a place as they hold in our national opinion.

10. *Nebuchadnezzar.* See *Daniel* iv, 30.

12. *candid friend,* Arnold himself. He says: "And to him who will use his mind as the wise man recommends, surely it is easy to see that our shortcomings in civilization are due to our inequality; or, in other words, that the great inequality of the classes and property, which came to us from the Middle Ages and which we maintain because we have the religion of inequality, that this constitution of things, I say has the natural and necessary effect, under present circumstances, of materializing our upper class, vulgarizing our middle class, and brutalizing our lower class. And this is to fail in civilization." *Mixed Essays, Collected Works,* 64-65.

20. *Newton,* Sir Isaac (1642-1727), the English mathematician and physicist who established by mathematical proof the law of gravitation.

21. *Darwin,* Charles (1809-1882), the English scientist who gave currency to the biological theory of organic evolution.

Finally, we are proud of our poets and poetry. Now poetry is nothing less than the most perfect speech of man, that in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth. It is no small thing, therefore, to succeed eminently in poetry. And so much is required for duly estimating success here, that about poetry it is perhaps hardest to arrive at a sure general verdict, and takes longest. Meanwhile, our own conviction of the superiority of our national poets is not decisive, is almost certain to be mingled, as we see constantly in English eulogy of Shakespeare, with much of provincial infatuation. And we know what was the opinion current amongst our neighbors the French—people of taste, acuteness, and quick literary tact—not a hundred years ago, about our great poets. The old *Biographie Universelle* notices the pretension of the English to a place for their poets among the chief poets of the world, and says that this is a pretension which to no one but an Englishman can ever seem admissible. And the scornful, disparaging things said by foreigners about Shakespeare and Milton, and about our national over-estimate of them, have been often quoted, and will be in everyone's remembrance.

A great change has taken place, and Shakespeare is now generally recognized, even in France, as one of the greatest of poets. Yes, some anti-Gallican cynic will say, the French rank him with Corneille and with Victor Hugo! But let me have

17. *Biographie Universelle, The Universal Biography, Ancient and Modern,* Paris. It has gone through several editions.

28. *anti-Gallican,* one out of sympathy with the French.

30. *Corneille . . . Victor Hugo.* Pierre Corneille (1606-1684), and Victor Hugo (1802-1885), were both

the pleasure of quoting a sentence about Shakespeare, which I met with by accident not long ago in the *Correspondant,* a French review which not a dozen English people, I suppose, look at. The writer is praising Shakespeare's prose. With Shakespeare, he says, "prose comes in whenever the subject, being more familiar, is unsuited to the majestic English iambic." And he goes on: "Shakespeare is the king of poetic rhythm and style, as well as the king of the realm of thought; along with his dazzling prose, Shakespeare has succeeded in giving us the most varied, the most harmonious verse which has ever sounded upon the human ear since the verse of the Greeks." M. Henry Cochin, the writer of this sentence, deserves our gratitude for it; it would not be easy to praise Shakespeare, in a single sentence, more justly. And when a foreigner and a Frenchman writes thus of Shakespeare, and when Goethe says of Milton, in whom there was so much to repel Goethe rather than to attract him, that "nothing has been ever done so entirely in the sense of the Greeks as *Samson Agonistes,*" and that "Milton is in very truth a poet whom we must treat with all reverence," then we understand what constitutes a European recognition of poets and poetry as contradistinguished from a merely national recognition, and that in favor both of Milton and of Shakespeare the judgment of the high court of appeal has finally gone.

I come back to M. Renan's praise of glory, from

dramatists. Arnold implies that the first, because of his formalism, and the second, because of his unrestrained romanticism of idea, could scarcely occupy a place of preëminence in world literature.

which I started. Yes, real glory is a most serious thing, glory authenticated by the Amphictyonic Court of final appeal, definitive glory. And even for poets and poetry, long and difficult as may be the process of arriving at the right award, the right award comes at last, the definitive glory rests where it is deserved. Every establishment of such a real glory is good and wholesome for mankind at large, good and wholesome for the nation which produced the poet crowned with it. To the poet himself it can seldom do harm; for he, poor man, is in his grave, probably, long before his glory crowns him.

Wordsworth has been in his grave for some thirty years, and certainly his lovers and admirers cannot flatter themselves that this great and steady light of glory as yet shines over him. He is not fully recognized at home; he is not recognized at all abroad. Yet I firmly believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognizes the worth, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time. Chaucer is anterior; and on other grounds, too, he cannot well be brought into the comparison. But taking the roll of our chief poetical names, besides Shakespeare and Milton, from the age of Elizabeth downwards, and going through it—Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Goldsmith, Cowper, Burns, Coleridge, Scott,

2. *Amphictyonic Court.* Neighboring communities among the Greeks organized councils or courts of elected delegates to promote worship and conduct festivals. These councils often attained much importance as the highest legislative bodies of powerful leagues.

Campbell, Moore, Byron, Shelley, Keats (I mention those only who are dead)—I think it certain that Wordsworth's name deserves to stand, and will finally stand, above them all. Several of the poets named have gifts and excellences which Wordsworth has not. But taking the performance of each as a whole, I say that Wordsworth seems to me to have left a body of poetical work superior in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, to that which any one of the others has left.

But this is not enough to say. I think it certain, further, that if we take the chief poetical names of the Continent since the death of Molière, and, omitting Goethe, confront the remaining names with that of Wordsworth, the result is the same. Let us take Klopstock, Lessing, Schiller, Uhland, Rückert, and Heine for Germany; Filicaia, Alfieri, Manzoni, and Leopardi for Italy; Racine, Boileau, Voltaire, André Chenier, Béranger, Lamartine, Musset, M. Victor Hugo (he has been so long celebrated that although he still lives I may be permitted to name him) for France. Several of these, again, have evidently gifts and excellences to which Wordsworth can make no pretension. But in real poetical achievement, it seems to me indubitable that to Wordsworth, here again, belongs the palm. It seems to me that Wordsworth has left behind him a body of poetical work which wears, and will wear, better on the whole than the performance of any one of these

14. *Molière*, Jean Baptiste Poquelin (1622-1673), a French dramatist belonging to the neo-classical school, and the foremost French writer of comedies.

personages, so far more brilliant and celebrated, most of them, than the homely poet of Rydal. Wordsworth's performance in poetry is on the whole, in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, superior to theirs.

This is a high claim to make for Wordsworth. But if it is a just claim, if Wordsworth's place among the poets who have appeared in the last two or three centuries is after Shakespeare, Molière, Milton, Goethe, indeed, but before all the rest, then in time Wordsworth will have his due. We shall recognize him in his place, as we recognize Shakespeare and Milton; and not only we ourselves shall recognize him, but he will be recognized by Europe also. Meanwhile, those who recognize him already may do well, perhaps, to ask themselves whether there are not in the case of Wordsworth certain special obstacles which hinder or delay his due recognition by others, and whether these obstacles are not in some measure removable.

The Excursion and *The Prelude,* his poems of greatest bulk, are by no means Wordsworth's best work. His best work is in his shorter pieces, and many indeed are there of these which are of first-rate excellence. But in his seven volumes the pieces of high merit are mingled with a mass of pieces very inferior to them; so inferior to them that it seems wonderful how the same poet should have produced both. Shakespeare frequently has lines and passages in a strain quite false, and which are entirely unworthy of him. But one can imagine his smiling if one could meet him in the Elysian Fields and tell him so; smiling and replying that he knew it perfectly well himself, and

what did it matter? But with Wordsworth the case is different. Work altogether inferior, work quite uninspired, flat and dull, is produced by him with evident unconsciousness of its defects, and he presents it to us with the same faith and seriousness as his best work. Now a drama or an epic fill the mind, and one does not look beyond them; but in a collection of short pieces the impression made by one piece requires to be continued and sustained by the piece following. In reading Wordsworth the impression made by one of his fine pieces is too often dulled and spoiled by a very inferior piece coming after it.

Wordsworth composed verses during a space of some sixty years; and it is no exaggeration to say that within one single decade of those years, between 1798 and 1808, almost all his really first-rate work was produced. A mass of inferior work remains, work done before and after this golden prime, imbedding the first-rate work and clogging it, obstructing our approach to it, chilling, not unfrequently, the high-wrought mood with which we leave it. To be recognized far and wide as a great poet, to be possible and receivable as a classic, Wordsworth needs to be relieved of a great deal of the poetical baggage which now encumbers him. To administer this relief is indispensable, unless he is to continue to be a poet for the few only—a poet valued far below his real worth by the world.

There is another thing. Wordsworth classified his poems not according to any commonly received plan of arrangement, but according to a scheme of mental physiology. He has poems of the fancy,

poems of the imagination, poems of sentiment and reflection, and so on. His categories are ingenious but far-fetched, and the result of his employment of them is unsatisfactory. Poems are separated one from another which possess a kinship of subject or of treatment far more vital and deep than the supposed unity of mental origin, which was Wordsworth's reason for joining them with others.

The tact of the Greeks in matters of this kind was infallible. We may rely upon it that we shall not improve upon the classification adopted by the Greeks for kinds of poetry; that their categories of epic, dramatic, lyric, and so forth, have a natural propriety, and should be adhered to. It may sometimes seem doubtful to which of two categories a poem belongs; whether this or that poem is to be called, for instance, narrative or lyric, lyric or elegiac. But there is to be found in every good poem a strain, a predominant note, which determines the poem as belonging to one of these kinds rather than the other; and here is the best proof of the value of the classification, and of the advantage of adhering to it. Wordsworth's poems will never produce their due effect until they are freed from their present artificial arrangement, and grouped more naturally.

Disengaged from the quantity of inferior work which now obscures them, the best poems of Wordsworth, I hear many people say, would indeed stand out in great beauty, but they would prove to be very few in number, scarcely more than half a dozen. I maintain, on the other hand, that what

strikes me with admiration, what establishes in my opinion Wordsworth's superiority, is the great and ample body of powerful work which remains to him, even after all his inferior work has been cleared away. He gives us so much to rest upon, so much which communicates his spirit and engages ours!

This is of very great importance. If it were a comparison of single pieces, or of three or four pieces, by each poet, I do not say that Wordsworth would stand decisively above Gray, or Burns, or Coleridge, or Keats, or Manzoni, or Heine. It is in his ampler body of powerful work that I find his superiority. His good work itself, his work which counts, is not all of it, of course, of equal value. Some kinds of poetry are in themselves lower kinds than others. The ballad kind is a lower kind; the didactic kind, still more, is a lower kind. Poetry of this latter sort counts, too, sometimes, by its biographical interest partly, not by its poetical interest pure and simple; but then this can only be when the poet producing it has the power and importance of Wordsworth, a power and importance which he assuredly did not establish by such didactic poetry alone. Altogether, it is, I say, by the great body of powerful and significant work which remains to him, after every reduction and deduction has been made, that Wordsworth's superiority is proved.

To exhibit this body of Wordsworth's best work,

18. *didactic kind.* Arnold explains his position at length, pages 15-17: the imagination, to which poetry makes its appeal, refuses to be the pack-horse of logic or didacticism.

to clear away obstructions from around it, and to let it speak for itself, is what every lover of Wordsworth should desire. Until this has been done, Wordsworth, whom we, to whom he is dear, all of us know and feel to be so great a poet, has not had a fair chance before the world. When once it has been done, he will make his way best, not by our advocacy of him, but by his own worth and power. We may safely leave him to make his way thus, we who believe that a superior worth and power in poetry finds in mankind a sense responsive to it and disposed at last to recognize it. Yet at the outset, before he has been duly known and recognized, we may do Wordsworth a service, perhaps, by indicating in what his superior power and worth will be found to consist, and in what it will not.

Long ago, in speaking of Homer, I said that the noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness. I said that a great poet receives his distinctive character of superiority from his application, under the conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth, from his application, I say, to his subject, whatever it may be, of the ideas

On man, on nature, and on human life,

which he has acquired for himself. The line quoted is Wordsworth's own; and his superiority arises from his powerful use, in his best pieces, his

26. *On man,* etc. From a selection of Wordsworth's *Recluse,* published in the introduction to *The Excursion.* This is the first line of the selection. (See page 244).

powerful application to his subject, of ideas "on man, on nature, and on human life."

Voltaire, with his signal acuteness, most truly remarked that "no nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation." And he adds: "There, it seems to me, is the great merit of the English poets." Voltaire does not mean, by "treating in poetry moral ideas," the composing moral and didactic poems—that brings us but a very little way in poetry. He means just the same thing as was meant when I spoke above "of the noble and profound application of ideas to life"; and he means the application of these ideas under the conditions fixed for us by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth. If it is said that to call these ideas *moral* ideas is to introduce a strong and injurious limitation, I answer that it is to do nothing of the kind, because moral ideas are really so main a part of human life. The question, *how to live,* is itself a moral idea; and it is the question which most interests every man, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied. A large sense is of course to be given to the term *moral.* Whatever bears upon the question, "how to live," comes under it.

> Nor love thy life, nor hate; but, what thou liv'st,
> Live well; how long or short, permit to heaven.

In those fine lines Milton utters, as everyone at once perceives, a moral idea. Yes, but so, too,

3. *Voltaire,* François Marie Arouet (1694-1778), a French skeptical critic and man of letters.
27. *Nor love,* etc. From *Paradise Lost,* XI, 553-554.

when Keats consoles the forward-bending lover on the Grecian Urn, the lover arrested and presented in immortal relief by the sculptor's hand before he can kiss, with the line,

> Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair—

he utters a moral idea. When Shakespeare says that

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep,

he utters a moral idea.

Voltaire was right in thinking that the energetic and profound treatment of moral ideas, in this large sense, is what distinguishes the English poetry. He sincerely meant praise, not dispraise or hint of limitation; and they err who suppose that poetic limitation is a necessary consequence of the fact, the fact being granted as Voltaire states it. If what distinguishes the greatest poets is their powerful and profound application of ideas to life, which surely no good critic will deny, then to prefix to the term ideas here the term moral makes hardly any difference, because human life itself is in so preponderating a degree moral.

It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life—to the question: How to live. Morals are often treated in a narrow and false fashion; they are bound up with

8. *We are such stuff*, etc. From Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, IV, i, 156. The "of" is misquoted for "on."

systems of thought and belief which have had their day; they are fallen into the hands of pedants and professional dealers; they grow tiresome to some of us. We find attraction, at times, even in a poetry of revolt against them; in a poetry which might take for its motto Omar Khayyám's words: "Let us make up in the tavern for the time which we have wasted in the mosque." Or we find attractions in a poetry indifferent to them; in a poetry where the contents may be what they will, but where the form is studied and exquisite. We delude ourselves in either case; and the best cure for our delusion is to let our minds rest upon that great and inexhaustible word *life,* until we learn to enter into its meaning. A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against *life;* a poetry of indifference toward moral ideas is a poetry of indifference toward *life.*

Epictetus had a happy figure for things like the play of the senses, or literary form and finsh, or argumentative ingenuity, in comparison with "the best and master thing" for us, as he called it, the concern, how to live. Some people were afraid of them, he said, or they disliked and undervalued them. Such people were wrong; they were un-

6. *Khayyám, Omar,* a Persian poet, mathematician, and astronomer of the twelfth century, and author of many quatrains. Some of these were freely rendered into English verse by Edward Fitzgerald in 1859, with the title *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám.* No one of the quatrains of *The Rubáiyát* in any edition by Fitzgerald contains the words that Arnold quotes, but he may have had in mind a quatrain with similar words in a series of five hundred quatrains of Omar published in 1882 by E. H. Whinfield. Some of these were known before Whinfield's publication.

19. *Epictetus,* a Greek stoic philosopher who taught in Rome during the first century, and later in Nicopolis. The quotation is from his *Discourses,* Book II, Chapter 23.

thankful or cowardly. But the things might also be over-prized, and treated as final when they are not. They bear to life the relation which inns bear to home. "As if a man, journeying home, and finding a nice inn on the road, and liking it, were to stay forever at the inn! Man, thou hast forgotten thine object; thy journey was not *to* this, but *through* this. 'But this inn is taking.' And how many other inns, too, are taking, and how many fields and meadows! but as places of passage merely. You have an object, which is this: to get home, to do your duty to your family, friends, and fellow-countrymen, to attain inward freedom, serenity, happiness, contentment. Style takes your fancy, arguing takes your fancy, and you forget your home and want to make your abode with them and to stay with them, on the plea that they are taking. Who denies that they are taking? but as places of passage, as inns. And when I say this, you suppose me to be attacking the care for style, the care for argument. I am not; I attack the resting in them, the not looking to the end which is beyond them."

Now, when we come across a poet like Théophile Gautier, we have a poet who has taken up his abode at an inn, and never got farther. There may be inducements to this or that one of us, at this or that moment, to find delight in him, to cleave to him; but after all, we do not change the truth about him—we only stay ourselves in his inn along with him. And when we come across a poet like Wordsworth, who sings

24. *Théophile Gautier* (1811-1872), a French critic, novelist, and romantic poet.

Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love, and hope,
And melancholy fear subdued by faith,
Of blessed consolations in distress,
Of moral strength and intellectual power,
Of joy in widest commonalty spread—

then we have a poet intent on "the best and master thing," and who prosecutes his journey home. We say, for brevity's sake, that he deals with *life*, because he deals with that in which life really consists. This is what Voltaire means to praise in the English poets—this dealing with what is really life. But always it is the mark of the greatest poets that they deal with it; and to say that the English poets are remarkable for dealing with it, is only another way of saying, what is true, that in poetry the English genius has especially shown its power.

Wordsworth deals with it, and his greatness lies in his dealing with it so powerfully. I have named a number of celebrated poets above all of whom he, in my opinion, deserves to be placed. He is to be placed above poets like Voltaire, Dryden, Pope, Lessing, Schiller, because these famous personages, with a thousand gifts and merits, never, or scarcely ever, attain the distinctive accent and utterance of the high and genuine poets—

Quique pii vates et Phoebo digna locuti,

at all. Burns, Keats, Heine, not to speak of others in our list, have this accent—who can doubt it? And at the same time they have treasures of humor, felicity, passion, for which in Wordsworth

1. *Of truth*, etc. From the portion of *The Recluse* mentioned above, lines 14-18.

27. *Quique*, etc.: "Those who were reverent bards saying things worthy of Phoebus." Cf. Vergil, *The Aeneid*, VI. 662. Phoebus was a Greek god, son of Zeus and Leto.

we shall look in vain. Where, then, is Wordsworth's superiority? It is here; he deals with more of *life* than they do; he deals with *life*, as a whole, more powerfully.

No Wordsworthian will doubt this. Nay, the fervent Wordsworthian will add, as Mr. Leslie Stephen does, that Wordsworth's poetry is precious because his philosophy is sound; that his "ethical system is as distinctive and capable of exposition as Bishop Butler's"; that his poetry is informed by his ideas which "fall spontaneously into a scientific system of thought." But we must be on our guard against the Wordsworthians, if we want to secure for Wordsworth his due rank as a poet. The Wordsworthians are apt to praise him for the wrong things, and to lay far too much stress upon what they call his philosophy. His poetry is the reality, his philosophy—so far, at least, as it may put on the form and habit of "a scientific system of thought," and the more that it puts them on—is the illusion. Perhaps we shall one day learn to make this proposition general, and to say: Poetry is the reality, philosophy the illusion. But in Wordsworth's case, at any rate, we cannot do him justice until we dismiss his formal philosophy.

The Excursion abounds with philosophy, and therefore *The Excursion* is to the Wordsworthian what it never can be to the disinterested lover of poetry—a satisfactory work. "Duty exists," says

6. *Leslie Stephen*, an English literary critic and man of letters (1832-1904). See his *Hours in a Library*, second series, "Wordsworth's Ethics."

10. *Bishop Butler*, Joseph Butler (1692-1752), who wrote in 1736 *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Course and Constitution of Nature*, a systematic argument tending to prove the divine origin of the Christian religion and all the phenomena of nature.

Wordsworth, in *The Excursion;* and then he proceeds thus—

> . . . Immutably survive,
> For our support, the measures and the forms,
> Which an abstract Intelligence supplies,
> Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.

And the Wordsworthian is delighted, and thinks that here is a sweet union of philosophy and poetry. But the disinterested lover of poetry will feel that the lines carry us really not a step farther than the proposition which they would interpret; that they are a tissue of elevated but abstract verbiage, alien to the very nature of poetry.

Or let us come direct to the center of Wordsworth's philosophy, as "an ethical system, as distinctive and capable of systematical exposition as Bishop Butler's"—

> . . . . . One adequate support
> For the calamities of mortal life
> Exists, one only—an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, howe'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of infinite benevolence and power;
> Whose everlasting purposes embrace
> All accidents, converting them to good.

That is doctrine such as we hear in church, too, religious and philosophic doctrine; and the attached Wordsworthian loves passages of such doctrine, and brings them forward in proof of his poet's excellence. But however true the doctrine may be, it has, as here presented, none of the characters of *poetic* truth, the kind of truth which

3. *Immutably survive,* etc. From *The Excursion,* IV, lines 73-76.

18. *One adequate support,* etc. From *The Excursion,* IV, lines 10-17.

we require from a poet, and in which Wordsworth is really strong.

Even the "intimations" of the famous Ode, those corner-stones of the supposed philosophic system of Wordsworth—the idea of the high instincts and affections coming out in childhood, testifying of a divine home recently left, and fading away as our life proceeds—this idea, of undeniable beauty as a play of fancy, has itself not the character of poetic truth of the best kind; it has no real solidity. The instinct of delight in Nature and her beauty had no doubt extraordinary strength in Wordsworth himself as a child. But to say that universally this instinct is mighty in childhood, and tends to die away afterwards, is to say what is extremely doubtful. In many people, perhaps with the majority of educated persons, the love of nature is nearly imperceptible at ten years old, but strong and operative at thirty. In general we may say of these high instincts of early childhood, the base of the alleged systematic philosophy of Wordsworth, what Thucydides says of the early achievements of the Greek race: "It is impossible to speak with certainty of what is so remote; but from all that we can really investigate, I should say that they were no very great things."

Finally, the "scientific system of thought" in Wordsworth gives us at last such poetry as this, which the devout Wordsworthian accepts—

> O for the coming of that glorious time
> When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth
> And best protection, this Imperial Realm,
> While she exacts allegiance, shall admit

22. *Thucydides*, a Greek historian (471-401, B.C.).
30. *O for the coming*, etc. From *The Excursion*, IX, lines 292-302.

> An obligation, on her part, to *teach*
> Them who are born to serve her and obey;
> Binding herself by statute to secure,
> For all the children whom her soil maintains,
> The rudiments of letters, and inform
> The mind with moral and religious truth.

Wordsworth calls Voltaire dull, and surely the production of these un-Voltarian lines must have been imposed on him as a judgment! One can hear them being quoted at a Social Science Congress; one can call up the whole scene. A great room in one of our dismal provincial towns; dusty air and jaded afternoon daylight; benches full of men with bald heads and women in spectacles; an orator lifting up his face from a manuscript written within and without to declaim these lines of Wordsworth; and in the soul of any poor child of nature who may have wandered in thither, an unutterable sense of lamentation, and mourning, and woe!

"But turn we," as Wordsworth says, "from these bold, bad men," the haunters of Social Science Congresses. And let us be on our guard, too, against the exhibitors and extollers of a "scientific system of thought" in Wordsworth's poetry. The poetry will never be seen aright while they thus exhibit it. The cause of its greatness is simple, and may be told quite simply. Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it.

The source of joy from which he thus draws is

the truest and most unfailing source of joy accessible to man. It is also accessible universally. Wordsworth brings us word, therefore, according to his own strong and characteristic line, he brings us word

Of joy in widest commonalty spread.

Here is an immense advantage for a poet. Wordsworth tells of what all seek, and tells of it at its truest and best source, and yet a source where all may go and draw for it.

Nevertheless, we are not to suppose that everything is precious which Wordsworth, standing even at this perennial and beautiful source, may give us. Wordsworthians are apt to talk as if it must be. They will speak with the same reverence of "The Sailor's Mother," for example, as of "Lucy Gray." They do their master harm by such lack of discrimination. "Lucy Gray" is a beautiful success; "The Sailor's Mother" is a failure. To give aright what he wishes to give, to interpret and render successfully, is not always within Wordsworth's own command. It is within no poet's command; here is the part of the Muse, the inspiration, the God, the "not ourselves." In Wordsworth's case, the accident, for so it may almost be called, of inspiration, is of peculiar importance. No poet, perhaps, is so evidently filled with a new and sacred energy when the

6. *Of joy*, etc. From *The Recluse* fragment mentioned above, line 18.

16. *The Sailor's Mother*, a poem by Wordsworth not in this volume. For a poem of like rank, see "Alice Fell," Appendix, page 344.

inspiration is upon him; no poet, when it fails him, is so left "weak as is a breaking wave." I remember hearing him say that "Goethe's poetry was not inevitable enough." The remark is striking and true; no line in Goethe, as Goethe said himself, but its maker knew well how it came there. Wordsworth is right, Goethe's poetry is not inevitable; not inevitable enough. But Wordsworth's poetry, when he is at his best, is inevitable, as inevitable as Nature herself. It might seem that Nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote his poem for him. He has no style. He was too conversant with Milton not to catch at times his master's manner, and he has fine Miltonic lines; but he has no assured poetic style of his own, like Milton. When he seeks to have a style he falls into ponderosity and pomposity. In *The Excursion* we have his style, as an artistic product of his own creation; and although Jeffrey completely failed to recognize Wordsworth's real greatness, he was yet not wrong in saying of *The Excursion* as a work of poetic style: "This will never do." And yet magical as is that power, which Wordsworth has not, of assured and possessed poetic style, he has something which is an equivalent for it.

Everyone who has any sense for these things feels the subtle turn, the heightening, which is

2. *weak as is a breaking wave.* From "A Poet's Epitaph" (see page 61).
4. *inevitable.* Note Arnold's device of repeating a particular word in order to bring out his thought.
19. *Jeffrey,* Lord Francis (1773-1850), editor of the *Edinburgh Review,* who began his critical review of *The Excursion* with the words Arnold quotes (see Appendix, page 390).

given to a poet's verse by his genius for style. We can feel it in the

> After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well—

of Shakespeare; in the

> . . . though fall'n on evil days,
> On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues—

of Milton. It is the incomparable charm of Milton's power of poetic style which gives such worth to *Paradise Regained,* and makes a great poem of a work in which Milton's imagination does not soar high. Wordsworth has in constant possession, and at command, no style of this kind; but he had too poetic a nature, and had read the great poets too well, not to catch, as I have already remarked, something of it occasionally. We find it not only in his Miltonic lines; we find it in such a phrase as this, where the manner is his own, not Milton's—

> . . . the fierce confederate storm
> Of sorrow barricadoed evermore
> Within the walls of cities;

although even here, perhaps, the power of style which is undeniable, is more properly that of eloquent prose than the subtle heightening and change wrought by genuine poetic style. It is style, again, and the elevation given by style, which chiefly makes the effectiveness of "Laodamia." Still the right sort of verse to choose from Wordsworth, if we are to seize his true and most char-

3. *After life's fitful fever,* etc. From *Macbeth,* III, ii, 23.
5. *though fall'n on evil days,* etc. From *Paradise Lost,* VII, 25-26.
18. *the fierce confederate storm,* etc. Lines 78-90 of *The Recluse* fragment mentioned above.

acteristic form of expression, is a line like this from "Michael"—

> And never lifted up a single stone.

There is nothing subtle in it, no heightening, no study of poetic style, strictly so called, at all; yet it is expression of the highest and most truly expressive kind.

Wordsworth owed much to Burns, and a style of perfect plainness, relying for effect solely on the weight and force of that which with entire fidelity it utters, Burns could show him.

> The poor inhabitant below
> Was quick to learn and wise to know,
> And keenly felt the friendly glow
> And softer flame;
> But thoughtless follies laid him low
> And stained his name.

Everyone will be conscious of a likeness here to Wordsworth; and if Wordsworth did great things with this nobly plain manner, we must remember, what indeed he himself would always have been forward to acknowledge, that Burns used it before him.

Still Wordsworth's use of it has something unique and unmatchable. Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power. This arises from two causes: from the profound sincereness with which Wordsworth feels his subject, and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of his subject itself. He

3. *And never lifted up a single stone.* See page 102, line 466.

12. *The poor inhabitant,* etc. From Burns's "A Bard's Epitaph," lines 19-25.

can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first-hand, almost austere naturalness. His expression may often be called bald, as, for instance, in the poem of "Resolution and Independence"; but it is bald as the bare mountain-tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur.

Wherever we meet with the successful balance, in Wordsworth, of profound truth of subject with profound truth of execution, he is unique. His best poems are those which most perfectly exhibit this balance. I have a warm admiration for "Laodamia" and for the great "Ode"; but if I am to tell the very truth, I find "Laodamia" not wholly free from something artificial, and the great "Ode" not wholly free from something declamatory. If I had to pick out poems of a kind most perfectly to show Wordsworth's unique power, I should rather choose poems such as "Michael," "The Fountain," "The Highland Reaper." And poems with the peculiar and unique beauty which distinguishes these, Wordsworth produced in considerable number; besides very many other poems of which the worth, although not so rare as the worth of these, is still exceedingly high.

On the whole, then, as I said at the beginning, not only is Wordsworth eminent by reason of the goodness of his best work, but he is eminent also by reason of the great body of good work which he has left to us. With the ancients I will not compare him. In many respects the ancients are far above us, and yet there is something that we demand which they can never give. Leaving the

12. *the great Ode,* "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (see page 192).

ancients, let us come to the poets and poetry of Christendom. Dante, Shakespeare, Molière, Milton, Goethe, are altogether larger and more splendid luminaries in the poetical heaven than Wordsworth. But I know not where else, among the moderns, we are to find his superiors.

To disengage the poems which show his power, and to present them to the English-speaking public and to the world, is the object of this volume. I by no means say that it contains all which in Wordsworth's poems is interesting. Except in the case of "Margaret," a story composed separately from the rest of *The Excursion* and which belongs to a different part of England, I have not ventured on detaching portions of poems, or on giving any piece otherwise than as Wordsworth himself gave it. But under the conditions imposed by this reserve, the volume contains, I think, everything, or nearly everything, which may best serve him with the majority of lovers of poetry, nothing which may disserve him.

I have spoken lightly of Wordsworthians; and if we are to get Wordsworth recognized by the public and by the world, we must recommend him not in the spirit of a clique, but in the spirit of disinterested lovers of poetry. But I am a Wordsworthian myself. I can read with pleasure and edification *Peter Bell,* and the whole series of *Ecclesiastical Sonnets,* and the address to Mr. Wilkinson's spade, and even the "Thanksgiving

9. *this volume,* that is, the volume of selections to which Arnold's essay was the preface.

28. *Peter Bell.* Selections from this long poem will be found in the Appendix, pages 346-350. The rest of the poems mentioned here are not in this volume, with the exception of selections from the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets.*

Ode"—everything of Wordsworth, I think, except "Vaudracour and Julia." It is not for nothing that one has been brought up in the veneration of a man so truly worthy of homage; that one has seen him and heard him, lived in his neighborhood, and been familiar with his country. No Wordsworthian has a tenderer affection for this pure and sage master than I, or is less really offended by his defects. But Wordsworth is something more than the pure and sage master of a small band of devoted followers, and we ought not to rest satisfied until he is seen to be what he is. He is one of the very chief glories of English Poetry; and by nothing is England so glorious as by her poetry. Let us lay aside every weight which hinders our getting him recognized as this, and let our one study be to bring to pass, as widely as possible and as truly as possible, his own word concerning his poems: "They will coöperate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, and will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier."

19. *They will coöperate*, etc. From a letter to Lady Beaumont, 1807, in which Wordsworth speaks of his own poetry. (Knight, *Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, I, 301.)

MEMORIAL VERSES

APRIL, 1850

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Goethe in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.
But one such death remained to come;
The last poetic voice is dumb—
We stand today by Wordsworth's tomb.

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bowed our head and held our breath.
He taught us little; but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.
With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of passion with eternal law;
And yet with reverential awe
We watched the fount of fiery life
Which served for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said:
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
Physician of the iron age,
Goethe has done his pilgrimage.
He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness, clear;
And struck his finger on the place,
And said: *Thou ailest here, and here!*
He looked on Europe's dying hour
Of fitful dream and feverish power;
His eye plunged down the weltering strife,

The turmoil of expiring life—
He said: *The end is everywhere;*
Art still has truth—take refuge there!
And he was happy, if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror, and insane distress,
And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth!—Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice!
For never has such soothing voice
Been to your shadowy world conveyed,
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.
Wordsworth has gone from us—and ye,
Ah, may ye feel his voice as we!
He, too, upon a wintry clime
Had fallen—on this iron time
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round;
He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth;
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sunlit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth returned; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furled,
The freshness of the early world.

Ah! since dark days still bring to light
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breast to steel;
Others will strengthen us to bear—
But who, ah! who, will make us feel?
The cloud of mortal destiny,
Others will front it fearlessly—
But who, like him, will put it by?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave
O Rotha, with thy living wave!
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

72. *Rotha*, the stream that flows past the churchyard of Grasmere where Wordsworth lies buried.

If thou indeed derive thy light from Heaven,
Then, to the measure of that heaven-born light,
Shine, Poet! in thy place, and be content:—
The stars preëminent in magnitude,
And they that from the zenith dart their beams
(Visible though they be to half the earth,
Though half a sphere be conscious of their brightness),
Are yet of no diviner origin,
No purer essence, than the one that burns,
Like an untended watch-fire, on the ridge
Of some dark mountain, or than those which seem
Humbly to hang, like twinkling winter lamps,
Among the branches of the leafless tree—
All are the undying offspring of one Sire;
Then, to the measure of the light vouchsafed,
Shine, Poet! in thy place, and be content.

SELECTED POEMS
OF
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
Hangs a thrush that sings loud; it has sung for three years.
Poor Susan has passed by the spot and has heard
In the silence of morning the song of the bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;
Bright volumes of vapor through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail;
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven; but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade.
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
And the colors have all passed away from her eyes!

1797 1800

1. *Wood Street,* etc. Wood Street, Lothbury, and Cheapside are neighboring streets in central London, the busiest and most congested part of the city in Wordsworth's time.

WE ARE SEVEN*

——A simple child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage girl;
She was eight years old, she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad;
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
—Her beauty made me glad.

"Sisters and brothers, little maid,
How many may you be?"
"How many? Seven in all," she said,
And wondering looked at me.

"And where are they? I pray you tell."
She answered, "Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

"Two of us in the churchyard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the churchyard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother."

*This poem, founded on an actual conversation between Wordsworth and a little Welsh girl, seems so simple as neither to raise nor to answer any problem. Yet a problem is stated in the fourth line. In Wordsworth's mind, the child is nearer the real truth of things in her lack of experience, and especially in her intuitive feelings, than are mature persons; hence, to him, the significance of her answer: life and death, the seen and the unseen, are as one. See "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," page 192. The first stanza of the poem is by Coleridge.

"You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven! I pray you tell,
Sweet maid, how this may be."

Then did the little maid reply,
"Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the churchyard lie,
Beneath the churchyard tree."

"You run about, my little maid,
Your limbs, they are alive;
If two are in the churchyard laid,
Then ye are only five."

"Their graves are green; they may be seen,"
The little maid replied,
"Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side.

"My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit,
And sing a song to them.

"And often after sunset, sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

"The first that died was sister Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

"So in the churchyard she was laid;
And, when the grass was dry,

Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

"And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side."

"How many are you, then," said I,
"If they two are in heaven?"
Quick was the little maid's reply,
"O master! we are seven."

"But they are dead; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!"
'Twas throwing words away; for still
The little maid would have her will,
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

1798 1800

SIMON LEE*

THE OLD HUNTSMAN

With an incident in which he was concerned

In the sweet shire of Cardigan,
Not far from pleasant Ivor Hall,
An old man dwells, a little man—
'Tis said he once was tall.

*Although Wordsworth places the scene in Wales, the old man described had been in fact a huntsman serving the squires of Alfoxden in Somersetshire, where Wordsworth was living when he wrote the poem. When the piece was ridiculed for its simplicity and its unpoetic realism, Wordsworth answered that the details are not such as should excite mirth, but pity. The real objection to "Simon Lee" is its style, which is trivial, childish, leading to such ludicrous effects as those in lines 59, 60. Compare "Michael" and "Resolution and Independence," in which equally realistic details are treated in a dignified manner (see pages 88 and 118).

Full five-and-thirty years he lived
A running huntsman merry;
And still the center of his cheek
Is red as a ripe cherry.

No man like him the horn could sound,
And hill and valley rang with glee
When echo bandied, round and round,
The halloo of Simon Lee.
In those proud days he little cared
For husbandry or tillage;
To blither tasks did Simon rouse
The sleepers of the village.

He all the country could outrun,
Could leave both man and horse behind;
And often, ere the chase was done,
He reeled, and was stone-blind.
And still there's something in the world
At which his heart rejoices;
For when the chiming hounds are out,
He dearly loves their voices!

But, oh, the heavy change!—bereft
Of health, strength, friends, and kindred, see!
Old Simon to the world is left
In liveried poverty.
His master's dead, and no one now
Dwells in the Hall of Ivor;
Men, dogs, and horses, all are dead;
He is the sole survivor.

And he is lean and he is sick;
His body, dwindled and awry,

Rests upon ankles swoln and thick;
His legs are thin and dry.
One prop he has, and only one—
His wife, an aged woman,
Lives with him, near the waterfall,
Upon the village common.

Beside their moss-grown hut of clay,
Not twenty paces from the door,
A scrap of land they have, but they
Are poorest of the poor.
This scrap of land he from the heath
Enclosed when he was stronger;
But what to them avails the land
Which he can till no longer?

Oft, working by her husband's side,
Ruth does what Simon cannot do;
For she, with scanty cause for pride,
Is stouter of the two.
And, though you with your utmost skill
From labor could not wean them,
'Tis little, very little—all
That they can do between them.

Few months of life has he in store
As he to you will tell,
For still, the more he works, the more
Do his weak ankles swell.
My gentle reader, I perceive
How patiently you've waited,
And now I fear that you expect
Some tale will be related.

O reader! had you in your mind
Such stores as silent thought can bring,

O gentle reader! you would find
A tale in everything.
What more I have to say is short,
And you must kindly take it:
It is no tale; but, should you think,
Perhaps a tale you'll make it.

One summer day I chanced to see
This old man doing all he could
To unearth the root of an old tree,
A stump of rotten wood.
The mattock tottered in his hand;
So vain was his endeavor
That at the root of the old tree
He might have worked forever.

"You're overtasked, good Simon Lee;
Give me your tool," to him I said;
And at the word right gladly he
Received my proffered aid.
I struck, and with a single blow
The tangled root I severed,
At which the poor old man so long
And vainly had endeavored.

The tears into his eyes were brought,
And thanks and praises seemed to run
So fast out of his heart I thought
They never would have done.
—I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
With coldness still returning;
Alas! the gratitude of men
Hath oftener left me mourning.

LINES WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING*

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sat reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played;
Their thoughts I cannot measure—
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from Heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

1798 1798

*This and the following two pieces may be said to hold in condensed form the whole of Wordsworth's belief in the value of nature

"A WHIRL-BLAST FROM BEHIND THE HILL"*

A whirl-blast from behind the hill
Rushed o'er the wood with startling sound;
Then—all at once, the air was still,
And showers of hailstones pattered round.
Where leafless oaks towered high above,
I sat within an undergrove
Of tallest hollies, tall and green;
A fairer bower was never seen.
From year to year the spacious floor
With withered leaves is covered o'er,
And all the year the bower is green.
But see! where'er the hailstones drop
The withered leaves all skip and hop;
There's not a breeze—no breath of air—
Yet here, and there, and everywhere
Along the floor, beneath the shade
By those embowering hollies made,
The leaves in myriads jump and spring,
As if with pipes and music rare
Some Robin Goodfellow were there,
And all those leaves, in festive glee,
Were dancing to the minstrelsy.

March 18, 1798 1800

to man. To Wordsworth, the spirit of love and joy that animates nature is the rightful, though lost, heritage of man. It is well to compare the fine simplicity of these lines with the flat simplicity of "Simon Lee" (page 38). It is highly important, moreover, to recognize the great range in style from the simple to the grand that lies between "Lines Written in Early Spring" and "Tintern Abbey."

*The actual experience on which the verses are based is told in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal*, pages 13, 14, in much the same words as in the verses. The idea that pleasure is an active principle in nature is expressed more fully in the poem that precedes, and in "I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud," page 169.

20. *Robin Goodfellow,* Puck, a playful elf of folk-lore.

TO MY SISTER*

It is the first mild day of March.
Each minute, sweeter than before,
The redbreast sings from the tall larch
That stands beside our door.

There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

My sister! ('tis a wish of mine)
Now that our morning meal is done,
Make haste, your morning task resign;
Come forth and feel the sun.

Edward will come with you; and, pray,
Put on with speed your woodland dress;
And bring no book; for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

No joyless forms shall regulate
Our living calendar;
We from today, my friend, will date
The opening of the year.

Love, now a universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth—
It is the hour of feeling.

*Dorothy Wordsworth is the person addressed.

13. *Edward*, Edward Montague, a little boy who spent several months with the Wordsworths at Alfoxden; he was a son of their friend Basil Montague.

21-36. The lines of stanzas 6-9 should be realized in their full intent: man may take in truth direct from nature by opening his heart to its influences.

One moment now may give us more
Than years of toiling reason;
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts will make,
Which they shall long obey;
We for the year to come may take
Our temper from today.

And from the blessed power that rolls
About, below, above,
We'll frame the measure of our souls;
They shall be tuned to love.

Then come, my sister! come, I pray,
With speed put on your woodland dress;
And bring no book; for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

1798 1798

EXPOSTULATION AND REPLY*

"Why, William, on that old gray stone,
Thus for the length of half a day,
Why, William, sit you thus alone,
And dream your time away?

*Though Wordsworth places the scene of this poem at Esthwaite, near Hawkshead, his school home, the poem was composed at Alfoxden. The "Matthew" of the poem may be Wordsworth's old schoolmaster. One must not interpret persons and places in Wordsworth's poems too literally. Both are quite likely to be composites.

Wordsworth said that this poem was a favorite with the Quakers. Lines 20-24 are especially in harmony with their teaching.

"Where are your books?—that light bequeathed
To beings else forlorn and blind!
Up! up! and drink the spirit breathed
From dead men to their kind.

"You look round on your Mother Earth,
As if she for no purpose bore you;
As if you were her first-born birth,
And none had lived before you!"

One morning thus, by Esthwaite Lake,
When life was sweet, I knew not why,
To me my good friend Matthew spake,
And thus I made reply:

"The eye—it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against or with our will.

"Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

"Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things forever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?

"—Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,
Conversing as I may,
I sit upon this old gray stone,
And dream my time away."

1798 1798

THE TABLES TURNED

AN EVENING SCENE ON THE SAME SUBJECT

Up! up! my friend, and quit your books;
Or surely you'll grow double.
Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks;
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun, above the mountain's head,
A freshening luster mellow
Through all the long green fields has spread,
His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife;
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! On my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher;
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

13. *throstle,* the thrush.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things—
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

1798 1798

LINES*

COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY, ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR. JULY 13, 1798.

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms,

*For comment on this poem, see Appendix, page 400.
4. "The river is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern."—Wordsworth's note.

Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
The hermit sits alone.
These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye;
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure, such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood

23. *Through a long absence.* The five years since Wordsworth's former visit had been years of storm and stress. Books X and XI of *The Prelude* show the wild exultation and the deep depression that he had experienced through the time of the French Revolution.

23-49. One can scarcely miss the force-gathering climaxes of these lines, which raise the thought in its onward sweep toward the great climax of the poem. The successive stages into which the poem is divisible should be recognized.

Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.
If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O silvan Wye! thou wanderer through the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!
And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint.
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again;
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills, when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever Nature led—more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For Nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint

75-85. These lines might seem exaggeration, were it not for Wordsworth's repeated references to the strength of this passion within him.

What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colors and their forms, were then to me
An appetite, a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize

97. This is one of the notable lines of English poetry.
106. "This line has a close resemblance to an admirable line of Young's, the exact expression of which I do not recollect."—Wordsworth's note.

In Nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.
Nor, perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay;
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou, my dearest friend,
My dear, dear friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy; for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee; and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place

For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshiper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service—rather say
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

July 13, 1798 1798

A NIGHT-PIECE*

———The sky is overcast
With a continuous cloud of texture close,
Heavy and wan, all whitened by the moon,
Which through that veil is indistinctly seen,
A dull, contracted circle, yielding light
So feebly spread that not a shadow falls,

*"Composed on the road between Nether Stowey and Alfoxden, extempore."—Wordsworth's note.

Dorothy Wordsworth records in her *Journal:* "25th—[January, 1798]. Went to Poole's after tea. The sky spread over with one continuous cloud, whitened by the light of the moon, which, though her dim shape was seen, did not throw forth so strong a light as to checker the earth with shadows. At once the clouds seemed to cleave asunder, and left her in the center of a blue-black vault. She sailed along, followed by multitudes of stars, small, and bright, and sharp."

Checkering the ground—from rock, plant, tree, or tower.
At length a pleasant instantaneous gleam
Startles the pensive traveler while he treads
His lonesome path, with unobserving eye
Bent earthwards; he looks up—the clouds are split
Asunder—and above his head he sees
The clear moon, and the glory of the heavens.
There in a black-blue vault she sails along,
Followed by multitudes of stars, that, small
And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss
Drive as she drives. How fast they wheel away,
Yet vanish not!—the wind is in the tree,
But they are silent; still they roll along
Immeasurably distant; and the vault,
Built round by those white clouds, enormous clouds,
Still deepens its unfathomable depth.
At length the vision closes; and the mind,
Not undisturbed by the delight it feels,
Which slowly settles into peaceful calm,
Is left to muse upon the solemn scene.

January 25, 1798 1815

NUTTING*

—It seems a day
(I speak of one from many singled out),
One of those heavenly days that cannot die;
When, in the eagerness of boyish hope,
I left our cottage threshold, sallying forth
With a huge wallet o'er my shoulders slung,

*Dorothy Wordsworth was doubtless the person addressed in this poem. It shows a delicacy, a poignant sensitiveness toward Nature unusual to a young boy, as well as the boy's more natural exultation in his woodcraft.

A nutting-crook in hand, and turned my steps
Toward some far-distant wood, a figure quaint,
Tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds
Which for that service had been husbanded,
By exhortation of my frugal dame—
Motley accouterment, of power to smile
At thorns, and brakes, and brambles—and in truth
More ragged than need was! O'er pathless rocks,
Through beds of matted fern, and tangled thickets,
Forcing my way, I came to one dear nook
Unvisited, where not a broken bough
Drooped with its withered leaves, ungracious sign
Of devastation; but the hazels rose
Tall and erect, with tempting clusters hung,
A virgin scene!—A little while I stood,
Breathing with such suppression of the heart
As joy delights in; and with wise restraint
Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed
The banquet; or beneath the trees I sat
Amongst the flowers, and with the flowers I played;
A temper known to those who, after long
And weary expectation, have been blessed
With sudden happiness beyond all hope.
Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves
The violets of five seasons reappear
And fade, unseen by any human eye;
Where fairy waterbreaks do murmur on
Forever; and I saw the sparkling foam,
And—with my cheek on one of those green stones
That, fleeced with moss, under the shady trees,
Lay round me, scattered like a flock of sheep—
I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,

9. *weeds*, clothes.
11. *dame*, Dame Tyson, at whose cottage Wordsworth lodged during his schooldays at Hawkshead.

In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
Tribute to ease; and, of its joy secure,
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,
And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,
And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with crash
And merciless ravage; and the shady nook
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,
Deformed and sullied, patiently gave up
Their quiet being; and, unless I now
Confound my present feelings with the past,
Ere from the mutilated bower I turned
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky.
Then, dearest maiden, move along these shades
In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand
Touch—for there is a spirit in the woods.

1799 1800

"STRANGE FITS OF PASSION HAVE I KNOWN"*

Strange fits of passion have I known;
And I will dare to tell,
But in the lover's ear alone,
What once to me befell.

When she I loved looked every day
Fresh as a rose in June,
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening moon.

*For comment on this poem and the four poems following, see Appendix, page 400.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
All over the wide lea;
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard plot;
And, as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near, and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon!
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped;
When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a lover's head!
"O mercy!" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead!"

1799 1800

"SHE DWELT AMONG THE UNTRODDEN WAYS"

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love;

2. *Dove*, a river that forms a part of the boundary between Derby and Stafford.

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!

1799 1800

"A SLUMBER DID MY SPIRIT SEAL"

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks and stones and trees.

1799 1800

"THREE YEARS SHE GREW IN SUN AND SHOWER"

Three years she grew in sun and shower,
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown;
This child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own.

"Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse; and with me
The girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

"She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute, insensate things.

"The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend;
Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mold the maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

"The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

"And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give

While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell."

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—
How soon my Lucy's race was run!
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm, and quiet scene;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.

1799 1800

"I TRAVELED AMONG UNKNOWN MEN"

I traveled among unknown men,
In lands beyond the sea;
Nor, England! did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!
Nor will I quit thy shore
A second time; for still I seem
To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
The joy of my desire;
And she I cherished turned her wheel
Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed,
The bowers where Lucy played;
And thine, too, is the last green field
That Lucy's eyes surveyed.

1799 1807

A POET'S EPITAPH*

Art thou a statist in the van
Of public conflicts trained and bred?
—First learn to love one living man;
Then may'st thou think upon the dead.

A lawyer art thou?—draw not nigh!
Go, carry to some fitter place
The keenness of that practiced eye,
The hardness of that sallow face.

Art thou a man of purple cheer?
A rosy man, right plump to see?
Approach; yet, Doctor, not too near,
This grave no cushion is for thee.

Or art thou one of gallant pride,
A soldier and no man of chaff?
Welcome!—but lay thy sword aside,
And lean upon a peasant's staff.

Physician art thou?—one, all eyes,
Philosopher!—a fingering slave,
One that would peep and botanize
Upon his mother's grave?

Wrapped closely in thy sensual fleece,
O turn aside—and take, I pray,
That he below may rest in peace,
Thy ever-dwindling soul, away!

*Compare this poem with Tennyson's "The Poet" and "The Poet's Mind," and with Mrs. Browning's "A Musical Instrument."

1. *statist,* statesman.
11. *Doctor,* clergyman.

A moralist perchance appears;
Led, heaven knows how! to this poor sod;
And he has neither eyes nor ears;
Himself his world, and his own God;

One to whose smooth-rubbed soul can cling
Nor form, nor feeling, great or small;
A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
An intellectual all-in-all!

Shut close the door; press down the latch;
Sleep in thy intellectual crust;
Nor lose ten tickings of thy watch
Near this unprofitable dust.

But who is he, with modest looks,
And clad in homely russet brown?
He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own.

He is retired as noontide dew,
Or fountain in a noonday grove;
And you must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

The outward shows of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley, he has viewed;
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude.

In common things that round us lie
Some random truths he can impart—
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

But he is weak; both man and boy,
Hath been an idler in the land;
Contented if he might enjoy
The things which others understand.

—Come hither in thy hour of strength;
Come, weak as is a breaking wave!
Here stretch thy body at full length,
Or build thy house upon this grave.

1799 1800

MATTHEW*

†In the school of Hawkshead is a tablet, on which are inscribed, in gilt letters, the names of the several persons who have been schoolmasters there since the foundation of the school, with the time at which they entered upon and quitted their office. Opposite to one of those names the author wrote the following lines:

If Nature, for a favorite child,
In thee hath tempered so her clay
That every hour thy heart runs wild,
Yet never once doth go astray,

Read o'er these lines; and then review
This tablet, that thus humbly rears
In such diversity of hue
Its history of two hundred years.

—When through this little wreck of fame,
Cipher and syllable, thine eye
Has traveled down to Matthew's name,
Pause with no common sympathy.

*The person whom Wordsworth had most immediately in mind in this and the two following poems was probably the Reverend Mr. Taylor, a teacher at the Hawkshead school. The person of the poem, however, is a composite of several men.

†The note following the title is Wordsworth's. This is true of all similar notes except those in square brackets.

And if a sleeping tear should wake,
Then be it neither checked nor stayed;
For Matthew a request I make
Which for himself he had not made.

Poor Matthew, all his frolics o'er,
Is silent as a standing pool,
Far from the chimney's merry roar,
And murmur of the village school.

The sighs which Matthew heaved were sighs
Of one tired out with fun and madness;
The tears which came to Matthew's eyes
Were tears of light, the dew of gladness.

Yet sometimes, when the secret cup
Of still and serious thought went round,
It seemed as if he drank it up—
He felt with spirit so profound.

—Thou soul of God's best earthly mold!
Thou happy soul! and can it be
That these two words of glittering gold
Are all that must remain of thee?

1799 1800

THE TWO APRIL MORNINGS*

We walked along, while bright and red
Uprose the morning sun;
And Matthew stopped, he looked, and said,
"The will of God be done!"

*This poem should be taken as revealing Wordsworth's belief that beauty and sorrow together preserve the affections, and, through the affections, strengthen and sweeten life.

A village schoolmaster was he,
With hair of glittering gray;
As blithe a man as you could see
On a spring holiday.

And on that morning, through the grass,
And by the steaming rills,
We traveled merrily, to pass
A day among the hills.

"Our work," said I, "was well begun,
Then from thy breast what thought,
Beneath so beautiful a sun,
So sad a sigh has brought?"

A second time did Matthew stop,
And fixing still his eye
Upon the eastern mountain-top,
To me he made reply:

"Yon cloud with that long purple cleft
Brings fresh into my mind
A day like this which I have left
Full thirty years behind.

"And just above yon slope of corn
Such colors, and no other,
Were in the sky, that April morn,
Of this the very brother.

"With rod and line I sued the sport
Which that sweet season gave,
And, to the churchyard come, stopped short
Beside my daughter's grave.

"Nine summers had she scarcely seen,
The pride of all the vale;
And then she sang—she would have been
A very nightingale.

"Six feet in earth my Emma lay;
And yet I loved her more,
For so it seemed, than till that day
I e'er had loved before.

"And, turning from her grave, I met,
Beside the churchyard yew,
A blooming girl whose hair was wet
With points of morning dew.

"A basket on her head she bare;
Her brow was smooth and white.
To see a child so very fair,
It was a pure delight!

"No fountain from its rocky cave
E'er tripped with foot so free;
She seemed as happy as a wave
That dances on the sea.

"There came from me a sigh of pain
Which I could ill confine;
I looked at her, and looked again—
And did not wish her mine!"

Matthew is in his grave, yet now,
Methinks, I see him stand,
As at that moment, with a bough
Of wilding in his hand.

1799 1800

60. *wilding,* a (blossoming) branch of crab-apple.

THE FOUNTAIN

A CONVERSATION

We talked with open heart, and tongue
Affectionate and true,
A pair of friends, though I was young,
And Matthew seventy-two.

We lay beneath a spreading oak,
Beside a mossy seat;
And from the turf a fountain broke,
And gurgled at our feet.

"Now, Matthew!" said I, "let us match
This water's pleasant tune
With some old border-song, or catch,
That suits a summer's noon;

"Or of the church-clock and the chimes
Sing here beneath the shade,
That half-mad thing of witty rimes
Which you last April made!"

In silence Matthew lay, and eyed
The spring beneath the tree;
And thus the dear old man replied,
The gray-haired man of glee:

"No check, no stay, this streamlet fears;
How merrily it goes!
'Twill murmur on a thousand years,
And flow as now it flows.

"And here, on this delightful day,
I cannot choose but think
How oft, a vigorous man, I lay
Beside this fountain's brink.

"My eyes are dim with childish tears;
My heart is idly stirred,
For the same sound is in my ears
Which in those days I heard.

"Thus fares it still in our decay;
And yet the wiser mind
Mourns less for what age takes away
Than what it leaves behind.

"The blackbird amid leafy trees,
The lark above the hill,
Let loose their carols when they please,
Are quiet when they will.

"With Nature never do *they* wage
A foolish strife; they see
A happy youth, and their old age
Is beautiful and free.

"But we are pressed by heavy laws,
And often, glad no more,
We wear a face of joy, because
We have been glad of yore.

"If there be one who need bemoan
His kindred laid in earth,
The household hearts that were his own,
It is the man of mirth.

"My days, my friend, are almost gone,
My life has been approved,
And many love me; but by none
Am I enough beloved."

"Now both himself and me he wrongs,
The man who thus complains!
I live and sing my idle songs
Upon these happy plains;

"And, Matthew, for thy children dead
I'll be a son to thee!"
At this he grasped my hand and said,
"Alas! that cannot be."

We rose up from the fountain-side;
And down the smooth descent
Of the green sheep-track did we glide;
And through the wood we went.

And, ere we came to Leonard's rock,
He sang those witty rimes
About the crazy old church-clock,
And the bewildered chimes.

1799 1800

LUCY GRAY*

OR SOLITUDE

Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray—
And when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see at break of day
The solitary child.

*This story, founded on fact, is, considered merely as fact, hopelessly sad. Realizing this, Wordsworth attempted to raise the tale above the level of mere realism into the realm of the imaginative. Lucy Gray thus becomes the presiding genius, as it were, of the moor.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew;
She dwelt on a wide moor
—The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door!

You yet may spy the fawn at play,
The hare upon the green;
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray
Will never more be seen.

"Tonight will be a stormy night—
You to the town must go;
And take a lantern, child, to light
Your mother through the snow."

"That, father, will I gladly do!
'Tis scarcely afternoon—
The minster-clock has just struck two,
And yonder is the moon!"

At this the father raised his hook,
And snapped a fagot-band;
He plied his work—and Lucy took
The lantern in her hand.

Not blither is the mountain roe;
With many a wanton stroke
Her feet disperse the powdery snow,
That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time;
She wandered up and down;
And many a hill did Lucy climb,
But never reached the town.

The wretched parents all that night
Went shouting far and wide;
But there was neither sound nor sight
To serve them for a guide.

At daybreak on a hill they stood
That overlooked the moor;
And thence they saw the bridge of wood,
A furlong from their door.

They wept—and, turning homeward, cried,
"In heaven we all shall meet";
—When in the snow the mother spied
The print of Lucy's feet.

Then downward from the steep hill's edge
They tracked the footmarks small,
And through the broken hawthorn hedge,
And by the long stone wall;

And then an open field they crossed;
The marks were still the same.
They tracked them on, nor ever lost;
And to the bridge they came.

They followed from the snowy bank
Those footmarks, one by one,
Into the middle of the plank—
And further there were none!

Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,
And never looks behind,
And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind.

1799 1800

RUTH

When Ruth was left half desolate,
Her father took another mate;
And Ruth, not seven years old,
A slighted child, at her own will
Went wandering over dale and hill,
In thoughtless freedom, bold.

And she had made a pipe of straw,
And music from that pipe could draw
Like sounds of winds and floods;
Had built a bower upon the green,
As if she from her birth had been
An infant of the woods.

Beneath her father's roof, alone
She seemed to live; her thoughts her own;
Herself her own delight;
Pleased with herself, nor sad, nor gay;
And, passing thus the livelong day,
She grew to woman's height.

There came a youth from Georgia's shore—
A military casque he wore,
With splendid feathers dressed;
He brought them from the Cherokees;

The feathers nodded in the breeze,
And made a gallant crest.

From Indian blood you deem him sprung—
But no! he spake the English tongue,
And bore a soldier's name;
And, when America was free
From battle and from jeopardy,
He 'cross the ocean came.

With hues of genius on his cheek
In finest tones the youth could speak.
—While he was yet a boy,
The moon, the glory of the sun,
And streams that murmur as they run,
Had been his dearest joy.

He was a lovely youth! I guess
The panther in the wilderness
Was not so fair as he;
And, when he chose to sport and play,
No dolphin ever was so gay
Upon the tropic sea.

Among the Indians he had fought,
And with him many tales he brought
Of pleasure and of fear;
Such tales as told to any maid
By such a youth, in the green shade,
Were perilous to hear.

He told of girls—a happy rout!
Who quit their fold with dance and shout,
Their pleasant Indian town,

To gather strawberries all day long;
Returning with a choral song
When daylight is gone down.

He spake of plants that hourly change
Their blossoms, through a boundless range
Of intermingling hues;
With budding, fading, faded flowers
They stand the wonder of the bowers
From morn to evening dews.

He told of the magnolia, spread
High as a cloud, high overhead!
The cypress and her spire;
—Of flowers that with one scarlet gleam
Cover a hundred leagues, and seem
To set the hills on fire.

The youth of green savannas spake,
And many an endless, endless lake,
With all its fairy crowds
Of islands, that together lie
As quietly as spots of sky
Among the evening clouds.

"How pleasant," then he said, "it were,
A fisher or a hunter there,
In sunshine or in shade
To wander with an easy mind;
And build a household fire, and find
A home in every glade!

"What days and what bright years! Ah me!
Our life were life indeed, with thee
So passed in quiet bliss,

And all the while," said he, "to know
That we were in a world of woe,
On such an earth as this!"

And then he sometimes interwove
Fond thoughts about a father's love:
"For there," said he, "are spun
Around the heart such tender ties,
That our own children to our eyes
Are dearer than the sun.

"Sweet Ruth! and could you go with me
My helpmate in the woods to be,
Our shed at night to rear;
Or run, my own adopted bride,
A silvan huntress at my side,
And drive the flying deer!

"Beloved Ruth!"—No more he said.
The wakeful Ruth at midnight shed
A solitary tear.
She thought again—and did agree
With him to sail across the sea,
And drive the flying deer.

"And now, as fitting is and right,
We in the church our faith will plight,
A husband and a wife."
Even so they did; and I may say
That to sweet Ruth that happy day
Was more than human life.

Through dream and vision did she sink,
Delighted all the while to think
That on those lonesome floods

And green savannas, she should share
His board with lawful joy, and bear
His name in the wild woods.

But, as you have before been told,
This stripling, sportive, gay, and bold,
And, with his dancing crest,
So beautiful, through savage lands
Had roamed about, with vagrant bands
Of Indians in the West.

The wind, the tempest roaring high,
The tumult of a tropic sky,
Might well be dangerous food
For him, a youth to whom was given
So much of earth—so much of heaven,
And such impetuous blood.

Whatever in those climes he found
Irregular in sight or sound
Did to his mind impart
A kindred impulse, seemed allied
To his own powers, and justified
The workings of his heart.

Nor less, to feed voluptuous thought,
The beauteous forms of Nature wrought,
Fair trees and gorgeous flowers;
The breezes their own languor lent;
The stars had feelings, which they sent
Into those favored bowers.

Yet, in his worst pursuits I ween
That sometimes there did intervene
Pure hopes of high intent;

For passions linked to forms so fair
And stately needs must have their share
Of noble sentiment.

But ill he lived, much evil saw,
With men to whom no better law
Nor better life was known;
Deliberately, and undeceived,
Those wild men's vices he received,
And gave them back his own.

His genius and his moral frame
Were thus impaired, and he became
The slave of low desires—
A man who without self-control
Would seek what the degraded soul
Unworthily admires.

And yet he with no feigned delight
Had wooed the maiden, day and night
Had loved her, night and morn.
What could he less than love a maid
Whose heart with so much nature played?
So kind and so forlorn!

Sometimes, most earnestly, he said,
"O Ruth! I have been worse than dead;
False thoughts, thoughts bold and vain,
Encompassed me on every side
When I, in confidence and pride,
Had crossed the Atlantic main.

"Before me shone a glorious world—
Fresh as a banner bright, unfurled
To music suddenly.

I looked upon those hills and plains,
And seemed as if let loose from chains,
To live at liberty.

"No more of this; for now, by thee
Dear Ruth! more happily set free
With nobler zeal I burn;
My soul from darkness is released,
Like the whole sky when to the east
The morning doth return."

Full soon that better mind was gone;
No hope, no wish remained, not one—
They stirred him now no more;
New objects did new pleasure give,
And once again he wished to live
As lawless as before.

Meanwhile, as thus with him it fared,
They for the voyage were prepared,
And went to the seashore,
But, when they thither came, the youth
Deserted his poor bride, and Ruth
Could never find him more.

God help thee, Ruth!—Such pains she had
That she in half a year was mad,
And in a prison housed;
And there, with many a doleful song
Made of wild words, her cup of wrong
She fearfully caroused.

Yet sometimes milder hours she knew,
Nor wanted sun, nor rain, nor dew,
Nor pastimes of the May;

—They all were with her in her cell;
And a clear brook with cheerful knell
Did o'er the pebbles play.

When Ruth three seasons thus had lain,
There came a respite to her pain;
She from her prison fled;
But of the vagrant none took thought;
And where it liked her best she sought
Her shelter and her bread.

Among the fields she breathed again;
The master-current of her brain
Ran permanent and free;
And, coming to the Banks of Tone,
There did she rest; and dwell alone
Under the greenwood tree.

The engines of her pain, the tools
That shaped her sorrow, rocks and pools,
And airs that gently stir
The vernal leaves—she loved them still;
Nor ever taxed them with the ill
Which had been done to her.

A barn her *winter* bed supplies;
But, till the warmth of summer skies
And summer days is gone
(And all do in this tale agree),
She sleeps beneath the greenwood tree,
And other home hath none.

An innocent life, yet far astray!
And Ruth will, long before her day,

Be broken down and old.
Sore aches she needs must have! but less
Of mind than body's wretchedness,
From damp, and rain, and cold.

If she is pressed by want of food,
She from her dwelling in the wood
Repairs to a roadside;
And there she begs at one steep place
Where up and down with easy pace
The horsemen-travelers ride.

That oaten pipe of hers is mute,
Or thrown away; but with a flute
Her loneliness she cheers,
This flute, made of a hemlock stalk,
At evening in his homeward walk
The Quantock woodman hears.

I, too, have passed her on the hills
Setting her little water-mills
By spouts and fountains wild—
Such small machinery as she turned
Ere she had wept, ere she had mourned,
A young and happy child!

Farewell! and when thy days are told,
Ill-fated Ruth, in hallowed mold
Thy corpse shall buried be,
For thee a funeral bell shall ring,
And all the congregation sing
A Christian psalm for thee.

1799 1800

HART-LEAP WELL

Hart-Leap Well is a small spring of water, about five miles from Richmond in Yorkshire, and near the side of the road that leads from Richmond to Askrigg. Its name is derived from a remarkable chase, the memory of which is preserved by the monuments spoken of in the second part of the following poem, which monuments do now exist as I have there described them.

PART FIRST

The knight had ridden down from Wensley Moor
With the slow motion of a summer's cloud,
And now, as he approached a vassal's door,
"Bring forth another horse!" he cried aloud.

"Another horse!"—That shout the vassal heard,
And saddled his best steed, a comely gray.
Sir Walter mounted him; he was the third
Which he had mounted on that glorious day.

Joy sparkled in the prancing courser's eyes;
The horse and horseman are a happy pair;
But, though Sir Walter like a falcon flies,
There is a doleful silence in the air.

A rout this morning left Sir Walter's hall,
That as they galloped made the echoes roar;
But horse and man are vanished, one and all;
Such race, I think, was never seen before.

Sir Walter, restless as a veering wind,
Calls to the few tired dogs that yet remain—
Blanch, Swift, and Music, noblest of their kind,
Follow, and up the weary mountain strain.

1. *Wensley Moor*, a moor in the upper part of the valley of the Ure River in Yorkshire.

The knight hallooed; he cheered and chid them on
With suppliant gestures and upbraidings stern;
But breath and eyesight fail; and, one by one,
The dogs are stretched among the mountain fern.

Where is the throng, the tumult of the race?
The bugles that so joyfully were blown?
—This chase it looks not like an earthly chase;
Sir Walter and the hart are left alone.

The poor hart toils along the mountain-side;
I will not stop to tell how far he fled,
Nor will I mention by what death he died;
But now the knight beholds him lying dead.

Dismounting, then, he leaned against a thorn;
He had no follower, dog, nor man, nor boy.
He neither cracked his whip nor blew his horn,
But gazed upon the spoil with silent joy.

Close to the thorn on which Sir Walter leaned
Stood his dumb partner in this glorious feat,
Weak as a lamb the hour that it is yeaned,
And white with foam as if with cleaving sleet.

Upon his side the hart was lying stretched.
His nostril touched a spring beneath a hill,
And with the last deep groan his breath had fetched
The waters of the spring were trembling still.

And now, too happy for repose or rest
(Never had living man such joyful lot!),
Sir Walter walked all round, north, south, and west,
And gazed and gazed upon that darling spot.

And climbing up the hill—it was at least
Four roods of sheer ascent—Sir Walter found
Three several hoof-marks which the hunted beast
Had left imprinted on the grassy ground.

Sir Walter wiped his face and cried, "Till now
Such sight was never seen by human eyes;
Three leaps have borne him from this lofty brow
Down to the very fountain where he lies.

"I'll build a pleasure-house upon this spot,
And a small arbor, made for rural joy;
'Twill be the traveler's shed, the pilgrim's cot,
A place of love for damsels that are coy.

"A cunning artist will I have to frame
A basin for that fountain in the dell!
And they who do make mention of the same,
From this day forth, shall call it 'Hart-leap Well.'

"And gallant stag! to make thy praises known,
Another monument shall here be raised—
Three several pillars, each a rough-hewn stone,
And planted where thy hoofs the turf have grazed.

"And in the summer-time, when days are long,
I will come hither with my paramour;
And with the dancers and the minstrel's song
We will make merry in that pleasant bower.

"Till the foundations of the mountains fail
My mansion with its arbor shall endure—
The joy of them who till the fields of Swale,
And them who dwell among the woods of Ure!"

75. *Swale,* a river of Yorkshire nearly parallel with the Ure.

Then home he went, and left the hart stone-dead,
With breathless nostrils stretched above the spring.
Soon did the knight perform what he had said;
And far and wide the fame thereof did ring.

Ere thrice the moon into her port had steered,
A cup of stone received the living well;
Three pillars of rude stone Sir Walter reared,
And built a house of pleasure in the dell.

And, near the fountain, flowers of stature tall
With trailing plants and trees were intertwined,
Which soon composed a little silvan hall,
A leafy shelter from the sun and wind.

And thither, when the summer days were long,
Sir Walter led his wondering paramour;
And with the dancers and the minstrel's song
Made merriment within that pleasant bower.

The knight, Sir Walter, died in course of time,
And his bones lie in his paternal vale.
But there is matter for a second rime,
And I to this would add another tale.

PART SECOND

The moving accident is not my trade;
To freeze the blood I have no ready arts.
'Tis my delight, alone in summer shade,
To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts.

As I from Hawes to Richmond did repair,
It chanced that I saw standing in a dell

101. *Hawes . . . Richmond,* Yorkshire towns.

Three aspens as three corners of a square;
And one, not four yards distant, near a well.

What this imported I could ill divine;
And, pulling now the rein my horse to stop,
I saw three pillars standing in a line—
The last stone pillar on a dark hilltop.

The trees were gray, with neither arms nor head;
Half wasted the square mound of tawny green;
So that you just might say, as then I said,
"Here in old time the hand of man hath been."

I looked upon the hill both far and near.
More doleful place did never eye survey;
It seemed as if the springtime came not here,
And Nature here were willing to decay.

I stood in various thoughts and fancies lost,
When one who was in shepherd's garb attired
Came up the hollow. Him did I accost,
And what this place might be I then inquired.

The shepherd stopped, and that same story told
Which in my former rime I have rehearsed.
"A jolly place," said he, "in times of old!
But something ails it now; the spot is cursed.

"You see these lifeless stumps of aspen wood—
Some say that they are beeches, others elms—
These were the bower; and here a mansion stood,
The finest palace of a hundred realms!

118. *When one,* etc. Wordsworth said, "A peasant whom we met near the spot told us the story so far as concerned the name of the well and the hart, and pointed out the stones."

"The arbor does its own condition tell;
You see the stones, the fountain, and the stream;
But as to the great lodge, you might as well
Hunt half a day for a forgotten dream!

"There's neither dog nor heifer, horse nor sheep,
Will wet his lips within that cup of stone;
And oftentimes, when all are fast asleep,
This water doth send forth a dolorous groan.

"Some say that here a murder has been done,
And blood cries out for blood; but, for my part,
I've guessed, when I've been sitting in the sun,
That it was all for that unhappy hart.

"What thoughts must through the creature's brain have passed!
Even from the topmost stone, upon the steep,
Are but three bounds—and look, sir, at this last—
O Master! it has been a cruel leap.

"For thirteen hours he ran a desperate race;
And in my simple mind we cannot tell
What cause the hart might have to love this place,
And come and make his deathbed near the well.

"Here on the grass perhaps asleep he sank,
Lulled by the fountain in the summer-tide;
This water was perhaps the first he drank
When he had wandered from his mother's side.

"In April here beneath the flowering thorn
He heard the birds their morning carols sing;
And he perhaps, for aught we know, was born
Not half a furlong from that selfsame spring.

"Now here is neither grass nor pleasant shade;
The sun on drearier hollow never shone;
So will it be, as I have often said,
Till trees, and stones, and fountain, all are gone."

"Gray-headed shepherd, thou hast spoken well;
Small difference lies between thy creed and mine.
This beast not unobserved by Nature fell;
His death was mourned by sympathy divine.

"The Being that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,
Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.

"The pleasure-house is dust—behind, before,
This is no common waste, no common gloom;
But Nature, in due course of time, once more
Shall here put on her beauty and her bloom.

"She leaves these objects to a slow decay,
That what we are, and have been, may be known;
But at the coming of the milder day
These monuments shall all be overgrown.

"One lesson, shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she shows, and what conceals:
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

1800 1800

180. Cf. Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner":

"He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God, who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

MICHAEL*

A PASTORAL POEM

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
But, courage! for around that boisterous brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation can be seen; but they
Who journey thither find themselves alone
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude;
Nor should I have made mention of this dell
But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones!
And to that simple object appertains
A story—unenriched with strange events,
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,
Or for the summer shade. It was the first
Of those domestic tales that spake to me
Of shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
Whom I already loved—not verily
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills
Where was their occupation and abode.
And hence this tale, while I was yet a boy

*See Appendix, page 401.

Sub-title. *Pastoral*, that is, a poem about shepherds. Pastoral poetry is sometimes highly conventionalized.

2. *Ghyll*, a dashing mountain torrent.

1-12. Note the completeness of the picture suggested in these few lines.

Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects, led me on to feel
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man, the heart of man, and human life.
Therefore, although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same
For the delight of a few natural hearts;
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful poets, who among these hills
Will be my second self when I am gone.
Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
There dwelt a shepherd; Michael was his name—
An old man, stout of heart and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. His mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs;
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and oftentimes,
When others heeded not, he heard the south
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
"The winds are now devising work for me!"
And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives
The traveler to a shelter, summoned him
Up to the mountains—he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him, on the heights.

40. *Grasmere Vale*, the Valley of Grasmere, in the Lake District.

So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs who should suppose
That the green valleys and the streams and rocks
Were things indifferent to the shepherd's thoughts.
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
The common air; hills, which with vigorous step
He had so often climbed; which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
Which, like a book, preserved the memory
Of the dumb animals whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
The certainty of honorable gain;
Those fields, those hills—what could they less?—had laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.
His days had not been passed in singleness.
His helpmate was a comely matron, old—
Though younger than himself full twenty years.
She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house. Two wheels she had
Of antique form; this large, for spinning wool,
That small, for flax; and if one wheel had rest,
It was because the other was at work.
The pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
To deem that he was old—in shepherd's phrase,
With one foot in the grave. This only son,
With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say

That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone,
And from their occupations out-of-doors
The son and father were come home, even then,
Their labor did not cease, unless when all
Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there,
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,
Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain homemade cheese. Yet when the meal
Was ended, Luke—for so the son was named—
And his old father both betook themselves
To such convenient work as might employ
Their hands by the fireside; perhaps to card
Wool for the housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field.
  Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,
That in our ancient, uncouth country style
With huge and black projection overbrowed
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim, the housewife hung a lamp—
An aged utensil, which had performed
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn—and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which going by from year to year, had found,
And left, the couple neither gay perhaps
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.
And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
There by the light of this old lamp they sat,
Father and son, while far into the night
The housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours

Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
This light was famous in its neighborhood,
And was a public symbol of the life
That thrifty pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the lake;
And from this constant light, so regular
And so far seen, the house itself, by all
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named "The Evening Star."
Thus living on through such a length of years,
The shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his helpmate; but to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet more dear—
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all—
Than that a child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail.
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.
And in a later time, ere yet the boy

134. *Easedale*, a small valley west of Grasmere Vale. *Dunmail-Raise*, the pass on the road from Grasmere to Keswick.

Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
Albeit of a stern, unbending mind,
To have the young one in his sight, when he
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sat with a fettered sheep before him stretched
Under the large old oak that near his door
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
Chosen for the shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
"The Clipping Tree," a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade,
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
Scared them while they lay still beneath the shears.
And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
A healthy lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old,
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the boy; wherewith equipped
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help;
And for this cause not always, I believe,
Receiving from his father hire of praise;

169. *Clipping.* "'Clipping' is the word used in the north of England for 'shearing.'"—Wordsworth's note.

Though naught was left undone which staff or voice
Or looks or threatening gestures could perform.
But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts, and to the heights,
Not fearing toil nor length of weary ways,
He with his father daily went, and they
Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the shepherd loved before
Were dearer now? that from the boy there came
Feelings and emanations—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind;
And that the old man's heart seemed born again?
Thus in his father's sight the boy grew up;
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,
He was his comfort and his daily hope.
While in this sort the simple household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the shepherd had been bound
In surety for his brother's son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means;
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had pressed upon him; and old Michael now
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed
That any old man ever could have lost.
As soon as he had armed himself with strength
To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
The shepherd's sole resource to sell at once
A portion of his patrimonial fields.
Such was his first resolve; he thought again,
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,

Two evenings after he had heard the news,
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself
Has scarcely been more diligent than I;
And I have lived to be a fool at last
To my own family. An evil man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us; and, if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him—but
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.
When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free;
He shall possess it, free as is the wind
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
Another kinsman—he will be our friend
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go,
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then
He may return to us. If here he stay,
What can be done? Where everyone is poor,
What can be gained?"
At this the old man paused,
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.
"There's Richard Bateman," thought she to herself.
"He was a parish-boy—at the church-door
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence,

And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbors bought
A basket, which they filled with peddler's wares;
And, with this basket on his arm, the lad
Went up to London, found a master there,
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas, where he grew wondrous rich,
And left estates and moneys to the poor,
And, at his birthplace, built a chapel, floored
With marble which he sent from foreign lands."
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
And her face brightened. The old man was glad,
And thus resumed: "Well, Isabel! this scheme
These two days has been meat and drink to me.
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
—We have enough—I wish indeed that I
Were younger—but this hope is a good hope.
—Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth
Tomorrow, or the next day, or tonight.
—If he *could* go, the boy should go tonight."
Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The housewife for five days
Was restless morn and night, and all day long
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work; for when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the last two nights
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep,
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go.

We have no other child but thee to lose,
None to remember—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy father he will die."
The youth made answer with a jocund voice;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.
With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared
As cheerful as a grove in spring. At length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the boy;
To which requests were added that forthwith
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbors round.
Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel
Had to her house returned, the old man said,
"He shall depart tomorrow." To this word
The housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.
Near the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a sheepfold; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss,
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked;
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped.

And thus the old man spake to him: "My son,
Tomorrow thou wilt leave me. With full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things thou canst not know of.——After thou
First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls
To newborn infants—thou did'st sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy father's tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;
While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy mother's breast. Month followed month,
And in the open fields my life was passed
And on the mountains; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke; among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
Have played together, nor with me didst thou
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."
Luke had a manly heart; but at these words
He sobbed aloud. The old man grasped his hand,
And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see
That these are things of which I need not speak.
—Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good father; and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands; for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still

Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together; here they lived,
As all their forefathers had done; and, when
At length their time was come, they were not loath
To give their bodies to the family mold.
I wished that thou shouldst live the life they lived,
But 'tis a long time to look back, my son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burthened when they came to me;
Till I was forty years of age, not more
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure
Another master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou shouldst go."
At this the old man paused;
Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:
"This was a work for us; and now, my son,
It is a work for me. But lay one stone—
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.
Nay, boy, be of good hope—we both may live
To see a better day. At eighty-four
I still am strong and hale—do thou thy part;
I will do mine.—I will begin again
With many tasks that were resigned to thee.
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
Will I without thee go again, and do
All works which I was wont to do alone,
Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, boy!
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
With many hopes; it should be so—yes—yes—
I knew that thou couldst never have a wish

To leave me, Luke; thou hast been bound to me
Only by links of love. When thou art gone,
What will be left to us!—but I forget
My purposes. Lay now the cornerstone,
As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,
When thou are gone away, should evil men
Be thy companions, think of me, my son,
And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,
And God will strengthen thee. Amid all fear
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
May'st bear in mind the life thy fathers lived,
Who, being innocent, did for that cause
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—
When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not here—a covenant
'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."
The shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his father had requested, laid
The first stone of the sheepfold. At the sight
The old man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his son; he kisséd him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that house in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell.—With morrow's dawn the boy
Began his journey, and, when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbors, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight.
A good report did from their kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing; and the boy

414. *A covenant 'twill be between us.* Suggestive of the early customs of the Jews and other primitive peoples.

Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the housewife phrased it, were throughout
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen."
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on, and once again
The shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the sheepfold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses. Ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.
There is a comfort in the strength of love;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart.
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old man, and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labor for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time
Did he repair, to build the fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart
For the old man—and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went,

447. Most narrators would have digressed here. Wordsworth's purpose was to emphasize Michael's life and character.

And never lifted up a single stone.
There by the sheepfold sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, or with his faithful dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time,
He at the building of this sheepfold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.
Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her husband. At her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.
The cottage which was named "The Evening Star"
Is gone—the plowshare has been through the ground
On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
In all the neighborhood. Yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door; and the remains
Of the unfinished sheepfold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Greenhead Ghyll.

October 11-December 9, 1800 1800

"IT WAS AN APRIL MORNING"*

It was an April morning. Fresh and clear
The rivulet, delighting in its strength,
Ran with a young man's speed; and yet the voice
Of waters which the winter had supplied
Was softened down into a vernal tone.
The spirit of enjoyment and desire,

466. See Arnold's comment, page 27.

*These verses are placed by Wordsworth in a section of his poems called "Poems on the Naming of Places." When he and his sister first settled at Grasmere they spent much time, often with Coleridge and others of their young friends, in exploring the region within walking distance, sometimes giving names from their experiences to the places they found. The scene of these verses is Easedale, a little valley two or three miles from Dove Cottage. The spontaneity of the lines is somewhat unusual with Wordsworth.

And hopes and wishes, from all living things
Went circling, like a multitude of sounds.
The budding groves seemed eager to urge on
The steps of June, as if their various hues
Were only hindrances that stood between
Them and their object. But, meanwhile, prevailed
Such an entire contentment in the air
That every naked ash, and tardy tree
Yet leafless, showed as if the countenance
With which it looked on this delightful day
Were native to the summer.—Up the brook
I roamed in the confusion of my heart,
Alive to all things and forgetting all.
At length I to a sudden turning came
In this continuous glen, where down a rock
The stream, so ardent in its course before,
Sent forth such sallies of glad sound that all
Which I till then had heard appeared the voice
Of common pleasure—beast and bird, the lamb,
The shepherd's dog, the linnet, and the thrush
Vied with this waterfall and made a song
Which, while I listened, seemed like the wild growth
Or like some natural produce of the air,
That could not cease to be. Green leaves were here,
But 'twas the foliage of the rocks—the birch,
The yew, the holly, and the bright green thorn,
With hanging islands of resplendent furze.
And on a summit, distant a short space,
By any who should look beyond the dell
A single mountain cottage might be seen.
I gazed and gazed, and to myself I said,
"Our thoughts at least are ours; and this wild nook,
My Emma, I will dedicate to thee."
—Soon did the spot become my other home,

39. *My Emma,* Dorothy Wordsworth.

My dwelling, and my out-of-doors abode.
And of the shepherds who have seen me there,
To whom I sometimes in our idle talk
Have told this fancy, two or three, perhaps,
Years after we are gone and in our graves,
When they have cause to speak of this wild place,
May call it by the name of "Emma's Dell."

1800 1800

THE SPARROW'S NEST*

Behold, within the leafy shade,
Those bright blue eggs together laid!
On me the chance-discovered sight
Gleamed like a vision of delight.
I started—seeming to espy
The home and sheltered bed,
The sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
My father's house, in wet or dry
My sister Emmeline and I
Together visited.

She looked at it and seemed to fear it,
Dreading, though wishing, to be near it—
Such heart was in her, being then
A little prattler among men.
The blessing of my later years

*"Written in the orchard, Townend, Grasmere. At the end of the garden of my father's house at Cockermouth was a high terrace that commanded a fine view of the River Derwent and Cockermouth Castle. This was our favorite playground. The terrace wall, a low one, was covered with closely-clipped privet and roses, which gave an almost impervious shelter to birds who built their nests there." —Wordsworth's note.

9. *Emmeline,* Dorothy Wordsworth.

Was with me when a boy—
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
And humble cares, and delicate fears,
A heart (the fountain of sweet tears),
And love, and thought, and joy.

1801 1807

TO A YOUNG LADY

WHO HAD BEEN REPROACHED FOR TAKING LONG WALKS IN THE COUNTRY*

Dear child of Nature, let them rail!
—There is a nest in a green dale,
A harbor and a hold;
Where thou, a wife and friend, shalt see
Thy own heart-stirring days, and be
A light to young and old.

There, healthy as a shepherd boy,
And treading among flowers of joy
Which at no season fade,
Thou, while thy babes around thee cling,
Shalt show us how divine a thing
A woman may be made.

Thy thoughts and feelings shall not die,
Nor leave thee, when gray hairs are nigh,
A melancholy slave;
But an old age serene and bright,
And lovely as a Lapland night,
Shall lead thee to thy grave.

1801 1802

*The young lady addressed is doubtless Dorothy Wordsworth.

TO A BUTTERFLY

Stay near me—do not take thy flight!
A little longer stay in sight!
Much converse do I find in thee,
Historian of my infancy!
Float near me; do not yet depart!
Dead times revive in thee.
Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art!
A solemn image to my heart,
My father's family!

Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days,
The time, when in our childish plays,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together chased the butterfly!
A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey; with leaps and springs
I followed on from brake to bush;
But she, God love her! feared to brush
The dust from off its wings.

March 14, 1802 1807

TO THE CUCKOO*

O blithe newcomer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O cuckoo! shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear;

*Professor Knight has pointed out the similarity in thought between the seventh stanza of this poem and the poem immediately following, which was composed at almost the same time.

From hill to hill it seems to pass
At once far off and near.

Though babbling only to the vale,
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;

The same whom in my schoolboy days
I listened to; that cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush and tree and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love,
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessed bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faërie place,
That is fit home for thee!

March 23-26, 1802 1807

"MY HEART LEAPS UP WHEN I BEHOLD"*

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky.
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The child is father of the man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

March 26, 1802 1807

WRITTEN IN MARCH

WHILE RESTING ON THE BRIDGE AT THE FOOT OF BROTHER'S WATER†

The cock is crowing,
The stream is flowing,
The small birds twitter,
The lake doth glitter,
The green field sleeps in the sun;
The oldest and youngest
Are at work with the strongest;
The cattle are grazing,
Their heads never raising;
There are forty feeding like one!

*Here is found in condensed form Wordsworth's whole conviction of the power of Nature to influence man.

†The poem was really composed impromptu on Friday, April 16, 1802 (Good Friday), while Wordsworth was resting on a bridge as he and Dorothy were returning from Penrith. The latter writes in her *Journal:* "The people were at work, plowing, harrowing, and sowing; lasses working; a dog barking now and then; the snow in patches at the top of the highest hills."

Like an army defeated
The snow hath retreated,
And now doth fare ill
On the top of the bare hill;
The plowboy is whooping—anon—anon.
There's joy in the mountains;
There's life in the fountains;
Small clouds are sailing,
Blue sky prevailing;
The rain is over and gone!

April 16, 1802 1807

THE REDBREAST CHASING THE BUTTERFLY*

Art thou the bird whom man loves best,
The pious bird with the scarlet breast,
Our little English robin;
The bird that comes about our doors
When autumn winds are sobbing?
Art thou the Peter of Norway boors?
Their Thomas in Finland,
And Russia far inland?
The bird that by some name or other
All men who know thee call their brother,
The darling of children and men?
Could Father Adam open his eyes

*Wordsworth seems to have ignored the facts of the struggle for existence among the lower orders of life and would have given little consideration to any theory of nature that saw among its greatest forces the rule of "tooth and claw" and the "survival of the fittest."

12. "See *Paradise Lost*, Book XI. where Adam points out to Eve the ominous sign of the eagle chasing 'two birds of gayest plume,' and the gentle hart and hind pursued by their enemy."—Wordsworth's note.

And see this sight beneath the skies,
He'd wish to close them again.
—If the butterfly knew but his friend,
Hither his flight he would bend,
And find his way to me,
Under the branches of the tree.
In and out he darts about;
Can this be the bird, to man so good,
That, after their bewildering,
Covered with leaves the little children
So painfully in the wood?

What ailed thee, Robin, that thou couldst pursue
A beautiful creature,
That is gentle by nature?
Beneath the summer sky
From flower to flower let him fly;
'Tis all that he wishes to do.
The cheerer, thou, of our indoor sadness,
He is the friend of our summer gladness.
What hinders, then, that ye should be
Playmates in the sunny weather,
And fly about in the air together!
His beautiful wings in crimson are dressed,
A crimson as bright as thine own.
Wouldst thou be happy in thy nest,
O pious bird! whom man loves best,
Love him, or leave him alone!

April 18, 1802 1807

21-23. These lines refer to "The Babes in the Wood." An English ballad tells the story.
23. *painfully*, with pains.

TO A BUTTERFLY

I've watched you now a full half-hour,
Self-poised upon that yellow flower;
And, little butterfly! indeed
I know not if you sleep or feed.
How motionless!—not frozen seas
More motionless! and then
What joy awaits you, when the breeze
Hath found you out among the trees,
And calls you forth again!

This plot of orchard ground is ours;
My trees they are, my sister's flowers;
Here rest your wings when they are weary;
Here lodge as in a sanctuary!
Come often to us, fear no wrong;
Sit near us on the bough!
We'll talk of sunshine and of song,
And summer days, when we were young;
Sweet childish days, that were as long
As twenty days are now.

April 20, 1802 1807

TO THE SMALL CELANDINE*

Pansies, lilies, kingcups, daisies,
Let them live upon their praises;
Long as there's a sun that sets,
Primroses will have their glory;

*"It is remarkable that this flower, coming out so early in the spring as it does, and so bright and beautiful, and in such profusion, should not have been noticed earlier in English verse. What adds much to the interest that attends it is its habit of shutting itself up and opening according to the degree of light and temperature of the air."—Wordsworth's note.

Long as there are violets,
They will have a place in story.
There's a flower that shall be mine,
'Tis the little celandine.

Eyes of some men travel far
For the finding of a star;
Up and down the heavens they go,
Men that keep a mighty rout!
I'm as great as they, I trow,
Since the day I found thee out,
Little flower—I'll make a stir,
Like a sage astronomer.

Modest, yet withal an elf
Bold, and lavish of thyself;
Since we needs must first have met
I have seen thee, high and low,
Thirty years or more, and yet
'Twas a face I did not know;
Thou hast now, go where I may,
Fifty greetings in a day.

Ere a leaf is on a bush,
In the time before the thrush
Has a thought about her nest,
Thou wilt come with half a call,
Spreading out thy glossy breast
Like a careless prodigal;
Telling tales about the sun,
When we've little warmth, or none.

Poets, vain men in their mood!
Travel with the multitude.
Never heed them; I aver

That they all are wanton wooers;
But the thrifty cottager,
Who stirs little out of doors,
Joys to spy thee near her home;
Spring is coming, thou art come!

Comfort have thou of thy merit,
Kindly, unassuming spirit!
Careless of thy neighborhood,
Thou dost show thy pleasant face
On the moor, and in the wood,
In the lane—there's not a place,
Howsoever mean it be,
But 'tis good enough for thee.

Ill befall the yellow flowers,
Children of the flaring hours!
Buttercups, that will be seen,
Whether we will see or no;
Others, too, of lofty mien;
They have done as worldlings do,
Taken praise that should be thine,
Little, humble celandine.

Prophet of delight and mirth,
Ill-requited upon earth;
Herald of a mighty band,
Of a joyous train ensuing,
Serving at my heart's command,
Tasks that are no tasks renewing,
I will sing, as doth behove,
Hymns in praise of what I love!

April 30, 1802 1807

TO THE SAME FLOWER

Pleasures newly found are sweet
When they lie about our feet.
February last, my heart
First at sight of thee was glad.
All unheard of as thou art,
Thou must needs, I think, have had,
Celandine! and long ago,
Praise of which I nothing know.

I have not a doubt but he,
Whosoe'er the man might be,
Who the first with pointed rays
(Workman worthy to be sainted)
Set the signboard in a blaze,
When the rising sun he painted,
Took the fancy from a glance
At thy glittering countenance.

Soon as gentle breezes bring
News of winter's vanishing,
And the children build their bowers—
Sticking 'kerchief-plots of mold
All about with full-blown flowers,
Thick as sheep in shepherd's fold—
With the proudest thou art there,
Mantling in the tiny square.

Often have I sighed to measure
By myself a lonely pleasure,
Sighed to think I read a book
Only read, perhaps, by me;

Yet I long could overlook
Thy bright coronet and thee,
And thy arch and wily ways,
And thy store of other praise.

Blithe of heart, from week to week
Thou dost play at hide-and-seek;
While the patient primrose sits
Like a beggar in the cold,
Thou, a flower of wiser wits,
Slip'st into thy sheltering hold;
Liveliest of the vernal train
When ye all are out again.

Drawn by what peculiar spell,
By what charm of sight or smell,
Does the dim-eyed curious bee,
Laboring for her waxen cells,
Fondly settle upon thee
Prized above all buds and bells
Opening daily at thy side,
By the season multiplied?

Thou art not beyond the moon
But a thing "beneath our shoon."
Let the bold discoverer thrid
In his bark the polar sea;
Rear who will a pyramid;
Praise it is enough for me,
If there be but three or four
Who will love my little flower.

May 1, 1802 1807

STANZAS

WRITTEN IN MY POCKET-COPY OF THOMSON'S "CASTLE OF INDOLENCE"*

Within our happy castle there dwelt one
Whom without blame I may not overlook;
For never sun on living creature shone
Who more devout enjoyment with us took.
Here on his hours he hung as on a book,
On his own time here would he float away,
As doth a fly upon a summer brook;
But go tomorrow, or belike today,
Seek for him—he is fled, and whither none can say.

Thus often would he leave our peaceful home,
And find elsewhere his business or delight;
Out of our valley's limits did he roam.
Full many a time, upon a stormy night,
His voice came to us from the neighboring height.
Oft could we see him driving full in view
At midday when the sun was shining bright;
What ill was on him, what he had to do,
A mighty wonder bred among our quiet crew.

Ah! piteous sight it was to see this man
When he came back to us, a withered flower—
Or like a sinful creature, pale and wan.
Down would he sit, and without strength or power
Look at the common grass from hour to hour.
And oftentimes, how long I fear to say,
Where apple trees in blossom made a bower,
Retired in that sunshiny shade he lay,
And, like a naked Indian, slept himself away.

*See Appendix, page 401.

Great wonder to our gentle tribe it was
Whenever from our valley he withdrew;
For happier soul no living creature has
Than he had, being here the long day through.
Some thought he was a lover and did woo;
Some thought far worse of him, and judged him wrong.
But verse was what he had been wedded to;
And his own mind did like a tempest strong
Come to him thus, and drove the weary wight along.

With him there often walked in friendly guise,
Or lay upon the moss by brook or tree,
A noticeable man with large gray eyes,
And a pale face that seemed undoubtedly
As if a blooming face it ought to be;
Heavy his low-hung lip did oft appear,
Depressed by weight of musing fantasy;
Profound his forehead was, though not severe;
Yet some did think that he had little business here.

Sweet heaven forfend! his was a lawful right;
Noisy he was, and gamesome as a boy;
His limbs would toss about him with delight,
Like branches when strong winds the trees annoy.
Nor lacked his calmer hours device or toy
To banish listlessness and irksome care;
He would have taught you how you might employ
Yourself; and many did to him repair—
And certes not in vain; he had inventions rare.

Expedients, too, of simplest sort he tried—
Long blades of grass, plucked round him as he lay.

36. *wight*, creature. 54. *certes*, certainly.

Made, to his ear attentively applied,
A pipe on which the wind would deftly play;
Glasses he had, that little things display,
The beetle panoplied in gems and gold,
A mailéd angel on a battle-day;
The mysteries that cups of flowers enfold,
And all the gorgeous sights which fairies do behold.

He would entice that other man to hear
His music, and to view his imagery.
And, sooth, these two were each to the other dear—
No livelier love in such a place could be.
There did they dwell—from earthly labor free,
As happy spirits as were ever seen;
If but a bird, to keep them company,
Or butterfly sat down, they were, I ween,
As pleased as if the same had been a maiden queen.

May 9-11, 1802 1815

RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE*

There was a roaring in the wind all night;
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
The birds are singing in the distant woods;
Over his own sweet voice the stock-dove broods;
The jay makes answer as the magpie chatters;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;

66. *sooth*, truly.
*See Appendix, page 402.

The grass is bright with raindrops; on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth,
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist, that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

I was a traveler then upon the moor;
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;
I heard the woods and distant waters roar,
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy.
The pleasant season did my heart employ—
My old remembrances went from me wholly,
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

But—as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joy in minds that can no further go,
As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low—
To me that morning did it happen so;
And fears and fancies thick upon me came;
Dim sadness—and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could name.

I heard the skylark warbling in the sky,
And I bethought me of the playful hare—
Even such a happy child of earth am I;
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;
Far from the world I walk, and from all care;
But there may come another day to me—
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
As if life's business were a summer mood,

As if all needful things would come unsought
To genial faith, still rich in genial good;
But how can he expect that others should
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?

I thought of Chatterton, the marvelous boy,
The sleepless soul that perished in his pride;
Of him who walked in glory and in joy
Following his plow, along the mountain-side.
By our own spirits are we deified—
We poets in our youth begin in gladness,
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,
A leading from above, a something given,
Yet it befell that, in this lonely place,
When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,
Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven
I saw a man before me unawares—
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore gray hairs.

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence,
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and whence,
So that it seems a thing endued with sense;
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself—

43. *Chatterton,* Thomas, a young poet of great natural gifts, born in Bristol in 1752, died by suicide in London in his eighteenth year just on the eve of what has seemed to his biographers the promise of success.

45. *him,* Burns, almost a neighbor of Wordsworth, who had died in poverty and defeat of spirit but six years before.

Such seemed this man, not all alive nor dead,
Nor all asleep—in his extreme old age.
His body was bent double, feet and head
Coming together in life's pilgrimage,
As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage
Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,
Upon a long gray staff of shaven wood.
And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,
Upon the margin of that moorish flood
Motionless as a cloud the old man stood,
That heareth not the loud winds when they call,
And moveth all together, if it move at all.

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon the muddy water, which he conned,
As if he had been reading in a book.
And now a stranger's privilege I took,
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
"This morning gives us promise of a glorious day."

A gentle answer did the old man make,
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew.
And him with further words I thus bespake,
"What occupation do you there pursue?
This is a lonesome place for one like you."
Ere he replied a flash of mild surprise
Broke from the sable orbs of his yet-vivid eyes.

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But each in solemn order followed each,

With something of a lofty utterance dressed—
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach
Of ordinary men—a stately speech,
Such as grave livers do in Scotland use,
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

He told that to these waters he had come
To gather leeches, being old and poor—
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure.
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor,
Housing with God's good help, by choice or chance;
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

The old man still stood talking by my side;
But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
And the whole body of the man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream,
Or like a man from some far region sent
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

My former thoughts returned—the fear that kills;
And hope that is unwilling to be fed;
Cold, pain, and labor, and all fleshly ills;
And mighty poets in their misery dead.
—Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,
My question eagerly did I renew,
"How is it that you live, and what is it you do?"

He with a smile did then his words repeat,
And said that, gathering leeches, far and wide
He traveled; stirring thus about his feet

The waters of the pools where they abide.
"Once I could meet with them on every side,
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may."

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old man's shape, and speech—all troubled me:
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.

And soon with this he other matter blended,
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanor kind,
But stately in the main; and, when he ended,
I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
In that decrepit man so firm a mind.
"God," said I, "be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!"

May 3-July 4, 1802 1807

"NUNS FRET NOT AT THEIR CONVENT'S NARROW ROOM"*

Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room;
And hermits are contented with their cells,
And students with their pensive citadels;
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,
Sit blithe and happy; bees that soar for bloom,
High as the highest peak of Furness Fells,
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells.
In truth, the prison unto which we doom
Ourselves no prison is. And hence for me,
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the sonnet's scanty plot of ground;
Pleased if some souls (for such there needs must be)
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

? 1807

"SCORN NOT THE SONNET"

Scorn not the sonnet; critic, you have frowned,
Mindless of its just honors. With this key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody
Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;

*The sonnets here given (pages 124-138) are selected from two groups of Wordsworth's own arrangement of his poems—*Miscellaneous Sonnets* and *Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.* For comments on "Nuns Fret Not" see Appendix, page 402.

6. *Furness Fells,* a rough upland district just south of the "Lake Country."

3. Browning is quite skeptical as to whether Shakespeare "unlocked his heart" in his sonnets. See his poem "House." The latest scholarship also inclines toward believing that Shakespeare's sonnets were exercises of imagination not related to his experiences.

4. *Petrarch,* a famous Italian poet and man of letters (1304-1374). For many years he paid respectful and chivalrous court to Laura through sonnets addressed to her, although separated from closer relationship by her marriage and his membership in the priesthood.

A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;
With it Camöens soothed an exile's grief;
The sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf
Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
His visionary brow. A glowworm lamp,
It cheered mild Spenser, called from faërieland
To struggle through dark ways; and when a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew
Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!

? 1827

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE*

SEPTEMBER 3, 1802

Earth has not anything to show more fair;
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty.
This city now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;

5. *Tasso,* an Italian poet (1544-1595).

6. *Camöens,* a Portuguese poet who died in 1580 after many years of exile, partly imposed and partly voluntary, growing out of an unfortunate love affair.

8. *Dante,* Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), the author of the *Divina Commedia,* and writer of many sonnets. The allusion is to crowns sometimes placed upon the brows of poets, as at an ancient poetic contest.

10. *Spenser,* Edmund (1552-1599), an English poet, author of *The Faerie Queene.* He was greatly hampered by his poverty and by the personal and political associations that this forced upon him.

11-12. *and when a damp fell round the path of Milton.* Milton's blindness and the varying fortunes of the cause of human liberty during his life called forth some of his greatest sonnets.

*This sonnet was composed upon the coach-top as Wordsworth and his sister were setting out for France, by way of Dover. Wordsworth was mistaken in the date—September 3, 1802—which he assigned by memory to the composition.

All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will.
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep,
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

July 31, 1802 1807

"IT IS A BEAUTEOUS EVENING, CALM AND FREE"*

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free;
The holy time is quiet as a nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the sea.
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear child! dear girl! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine—
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year,
And worship'st at the temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

August, 1802 1807

*Composed at the seaside near Calais. The child referred to is Caroline, Wordsworth's daughter (see page xx).

12. *Thou liest in Abraham's bosom.* See the parable of the rich man, *Luke* xvi, 23.

COMPOSED BY THE SEASIDE, NEAR CALAIS*

AUGUST, 1802

Fair star of evening, splendor of the west,
Star of my country!—on the horizon's brink
Thou hangest, stooping, as might seem, to sink
On England's bosom; yet well pleased to rest,
Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest
Conspicuous to the nations. Thou, I think,
Shouldst be my country's emblem, and shouldst wink,
Bright star! with laughter on her banners, dressed
In thy fresh beauty. There! that dusky spot
Beneath thee, that is England; there she lies.
Blessings be on you both! one hope, one lot,
One life, one glory!—I, with many a fear
For my dear country, many heartfelt sighs,
Among men who do not love her, linger here.

August, 1802 1807

"I GRIEVED FOR BUONAPARTE"†

I grieved for Buonaparté, with a vain
And an unthinking grief! The tenderest mood
Of that man's mind—what can it be? what food
Fed his first hopes? what knowledge could *he* gain?
'Tis not in battles that from youth we train
The governor who must be wise and good,

*Wordsworth was fearful of the political situation between England and France. Formal peace had been established. But not six months later, August 2, 1802, Napoleon had been made consul for life, and English liberty was at once imperiled by his overshadowing figure. This sonnet and those following upon the subject of liberty, all written under this stress, recall Wordsworth's earlier devotion to the cause of freedom in France.

†Compare the sentiment of this sonnet with that expressed in "The Happy Warrior," page 187.

And temper with the sternness of the brain
Thoughts motherly, and meek as womanhood.
Wisdom doth live with children round her knees;
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk
Of the mind's business—these are the degrees
By which true Sway doth mount; this is the stalk
True Power doth grow on; and her rights are these.

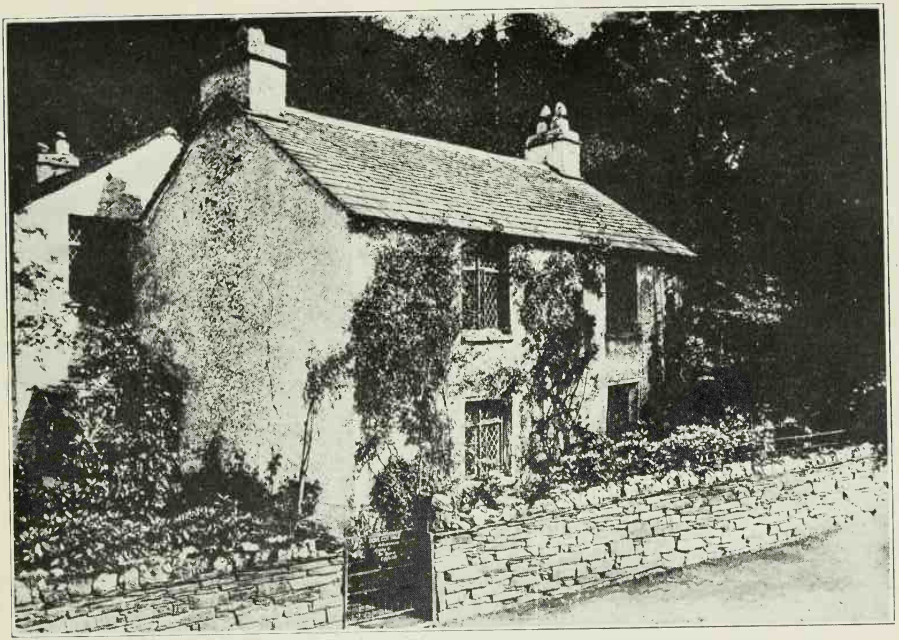
September 6, 1802 1802

CALAIS, AUGUST, 1802*

Is it a reed that's shaken by the wind,
Or what is it that ye go forth to see?
Lords, lawyers, statesmen, squires of low degree,
Men known, and men unknown, sick, lame, and blind,
Post forward all, like creatures of one kind,
With first-fruit offerings crowd to bend the knee
In France, before the new-born Majesty.
'Tis ever thus. Ye men of prostrate mind,
A seemly reverence may be paid to power;
But that's a loyal virtue, never sown
In haste, nor springing with a transient shower.
When truth, when sense, when liberty were flown,
What hardship had it been to wait an hour?
Shame on you, feeble heads, to slavery prone!

August, 1802 1807

*Many English people of all sorts flocked to Paris to see Napoleon upon his elevation to the consulship for life. The metaphor underlying the sonnet is explained by *Luke* vii, 24. The poem was first published in the *Morning Post,* January 29, 1803.



DOVE COTTAGE, GRASMERE

(Wordsworth's home. 1800-1808.)

ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC*

Once did she hold the gorgeous east in fee,
And was the safeguard of the west—the worth
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
Venice, the eldest child of Liberty.
She was a maiden city, bright and free;
No guile seduced, no force could violate;
And, when she took unto herself a mate,
She must espouse the everlasting sea.
And what if she had seen those glories fade,
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay;
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
When her long life hath reached its final day—
Men are we, and must grieve when even the shade
Of that which once was great is passed away.

August, 1802? 1807

TO TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE†

Toussaint, the most unhappy man of men!
Whether the whistling rustic tend his plow
Within thy hearing, or thy head be now

*Venice was born free, and for centuries maintained institutions republican in form though quite oligarchical in actuality. She not only became rich through her oriental trade, but served as a bulwark for western Europe against Asiatic invasion. In 1797, by the treaty of Campo Formio between France and Austria, most of the Venetian territory passed into the hands of the Austrian Empire, where it remained until joined with a free and united Italy in 1866.

8. The reference is to the ceremonial marriage of Venice to the sea, which took place annually from about the eleventh century.

†Toussaint L'Ouverture, a negro slave, was born in 1743. After a series of revolts and revolutions he succeeded in making Haiti independent of France. He was compelled to surrender in 1801 and died a prisoner in France two years later.

This sonnet first appeared in the *Morning Post,* February 2, 1803.

Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den—
O miserable chieftain! where and when
Wilt thou find patience! Yet die not; do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow.
Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee—air, earth, and skies.
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies—
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

August, 1802? **1807**

SEPTEMBER, 1802. NEAR DOVER*

Inland, within a hollow vale, I stood,
And saw, while sea was calm and air was clear,
The coast of France—the coast of France how near!—
Drawn almost into frightful neighborhood.
I shrunk; for verily the barrier flood
Was like a lake, or river bright and fair,
A span of waters; yet what power is there!
What mightiness for evil and for good!
Even so doth God protect us if we be
Virtuous and wise. Winds blow, and waters roll,
Strength to the brave, and power, and Deity;
Yet in themselves are nothing! One decree
Spake laws to *them,* and said that by the soul
Only, the nations shall be great and free.

September, 1802 **1807**

*Napoleon made great preparations for the invasion of England in 1803. He was reported as saying, as he gazed across the Straits, "Make me master of that strip of water for twelve hours, and I am master of the world."

LONDON, 1802*

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour.
England hath need of thee; she is a fen
Of stagnant waters—altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again,
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea—
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

September, 1802 1807

WRITTEN IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER, 1802†

O Friend! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am, oppressed,
To think that now our life is only dressed

*Wordsworth probably felt more indebted to Milton than to any other English poet, and more closely bound in sympathy with his memory. Here he feels drawn to Milton by the bonds of a common devotion to liberty. The rising tide of emotion through this sonnet is noteworthy.

9. In such characterizations as this Wordsworth was unusually apt. See "Resolution and Independence," page 118.

†"This was written immediately after my return from France to London, when I could not but be struck, as here described, with the vanity and parade of our own country, especially in great towns and cities, as contrasted with the quiet, and I may say the desolation, that the Revolution had produced in France. This must be borne in mind, or else the reader may think that in this and the succeeding sonnets I have exaggerated the mischief engendered and fostered among us by undisturbed wealth."—Wordsworth's note.

1. *Friend,* Coleridge.

For show; mean handiwork of craftsman, cook,
Or groom!—We must run glittering like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest;
The wealthiest man among us is the best;
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry; and these we adore.
Plain living and high thinking are no more;
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

September, 1802 1807

"IT IS NOT TO BE THOUGHT OF"*

It is not to be thought of that the flood
Of British freedom, which, to the open sea
Of the world's praise, from dark antiquity
Hath flowed, "with pomp of waters, unwithstood,"
Roused though it be full often to a mood
Which spurns the check of salutary bands,
That this most famous stream in bogs and sands
Should perish; and to evil and to good
Be lost forever. In our halls is hung
Armory of the invincible knights of old.
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held.—In everything we are sprung
Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

1802 or *1803* 1807

*Wordsworth's sonnet was first published in the *Morning Post*, April 16, 1803.

4. For this quotation Wordsworth acknowledges his indebtedness to Samuel Daniel's *Civil Wars between the Two Houses of Lancaster and York*, 1595 (Book II, stanza 7).

"WHEN I HAVE BORNE IN MEMORY"

When I have borne in memory what has tamed
Great nations, how ennobling thoughts depart
When men change swords for ledgers, and desert
The student's bower for gold, some fears unnamed
I had, my Country—am I to be blamed?
Now, when I think of thee, and what thou art,
Verily, in the bottom of my heart,
Of those unfilial fears I am ashamed.
For dearly must we prize thee; we who find
In thee a bulwark for the cause of men;
And I by my affection was beguiled—
What wonder if a poet now and then,
Among the many movements of his mind,
Felt for thee as a lover or a child!

1802 or *1803* 1807

TO THE MEN OF KENT. OCTOBER, 1803.*

Vanguard of liberty, ye men of Kent,
Ye children of a soil that doth advance
Her haughty brow against the coast of France,
Now is the time to prove your hardiment!
To France be words of invitation sent!
They from their fields can see the countenance

10. When this sonnet was published in the *Morning Post* in September, 1803, all of continental Europe was subject to the will of Napoleon, and England alone seemed to stand for human liberty.

*England was almost hourly expecting the invasion of Napoleon. Kent would be the first to suffer. The "men of Kent" are traditionally those of that part of the shire nearest France. It was they who held out so bravely against William the Conqueror in 1066 that he allowed them their ancient charter privilege of inheritance by gavelkind, and not by primogeniture—that is, inheritance of property equally by all a man's children, and not chiefly by the eldest son.

Of your fierce war, may ken the glittering lance,
And hear you shouting forth your brave intent.
Left single, in bold parley, ye, of yore,
Did from the Norman win a gallant wreath;
Confirmed the charters that were yours before;
No parleying now. In Britain is one breath;
We all are with you now from shore to shore.
Ye men of Kent, 'tis victory or death!

October, 1803 1807

NOVEMBER, 1806

Another year!—another deadly blow!
Another mighty empire overthrown!
And we are left, or shall be left, alone;
The last that dare to struggle with the foe.
'Tis well! from this day forward we shall know
That in ourselves our safety must be sought;
That by our own right hands it must be wrought;
That we must stand unpropped, or be laid low.
O dastard whom such foretaste doth not cheer!
We shall exult, if they who rule the land
Be men who hold its many blessings dear,
Wise, upright, valiant; not a servile band,
Who are to judge of danger which they fear,
And honor which they do not understand.

1806 1807

2. Napoleon overthrew Prussia in the battle of Jena, October, 1806.

THOUGHT OF A BRITON ON THE SUBJUGATION OF SWITZERLAND*

Two voices are there; one is of the sea,
One of the mountains—each a mighty voice.
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice;
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!
There came a tyrant, and with holy glee
Thou fought'st against him, but hast vainly striven.
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft.
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left;
For, high-souled maid, what sorrow would it be
That mountain floods should thunder as before,
And ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
And neither awful voice be heard by thee!

Early in 1807 1807

"AND IS IT AMONG RUDE UNTUTORED DALES"†

And is it among rude untutored dales,
There, and there only, that the heart is true?
And, rising to repel or to subdue,
Is it by rocks and woods that man prevails?
Ah, no! though Nature's dread protection fails,

*During the ascendency of Napoleon, Switzerland was at the mercy of France, sometimes profiting by, but generally suffering from the dictates of the Emperor.

†The sentiment of this sonnet may well be compared with Wordsworth's pronouncements upon the influence of natural objects in ennobling the spirit; this idea occurs in many places, especially in *The Prelude*, pages 248-315.

There is a bulwark in the soul. This knew
Iberian burghers when the sword they drew
In Zaragoza, naked to the gales
Of fiercely-breathing war. The truth was felt
By Palafox, and many a brave compeer,
Like him of noble birth and noble mind;
By ladies, meek-eyed women without fear;
And wanderers of the street, to whom is dealt
The bread which without industry they find.

1809 1815

"THE POWER OF ARMIES IS A VISIBLE THING"

The power of armies is a visible thing,
Formal, and circumscribed in time and space;
But who the limits of that power shall trace
Which a brave people into light can bring
Or hide, at will—for freedom combating
By just revenge inflamed? No foot may chase,
No eye can follow, to a fatal place
That power, that spirit, whether on the wing
Like the strong wind, or sleeping like the wind
Within its awful caves.—From year to year
Springs this indigenous produce far and near;
No craft this subtle element can bind,
Rising like water from the soil, to find
In every nook a lip that it may cheer.

1811 1815

8. *Zaragoza.* The people of the city of Saragossa in Spain, under their captain-general, Jose de Palafox y Melzi, fought so desperately against the French in 1808 that the hostile army withdrew. Later, Napoleon for ninety days besieged the city, which surrendered only after Palafox was laid low by pestilence.

"THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US"*

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.
Little we see in nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
The sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers—
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathéd horn.

? 1807

TO SLEEP

A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas;
Smooth fields; white sheets of water, and pure sky—
I have thought of all by turns, and yet do lie
Sleepless! and soon the small birds' melodies
Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees;
And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.
Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay

*In this sonnet Wordsworth strikes a universal note that will always awaken the spirit of those who feel themselves bound in slavery to things, and yet would be free in nature. Its spontaneousness contrasts with the formality of some of the other sonnets.

13. *Proteus,* a sea-god of classic mythology who had the power of changing his shape.

14. *Triton,* a sea divinity of Greek and Latin mythology.

And could not win thee, Sleep! by any stealth.
So do not let me wear tonight away—
Without thee what is all the morning's wealth?
Come, blessed barrier between day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health!

? 1807

"BROOK! WHOSE SOCIETY THE POET SEEKS"

Brook! whose society the poet seeks,
Intent his wasted spirits to renew;
And whom the curious painter doth pursue
Through rocky passes, among flowery creeks,
And tracks thee dancing down thy waterbreaks;
If wish were mine some type of thee to view,
Thee, and not thee thyself, I would not do
Like Grecian artists, give thee human cheeks,
Channels for tears; no naiad should'st thou be—
Have neither limbs, feet, feathers, joints, nor hairs.
It seems the Eternal Soul is clothed in thee
With purer robes than those of flesh and blood,
And hath bestowed on thee a safer good;
Unwearied joy, and life without its cares.

1806 1815

"IT IS NO SPIRIT WHO FROM HEAVEN HATH FLOWN*

It is no spirit who from heaven hath flown,
And is descending on his embassy,
Nor traveler gone from earth the heavens to espy!
'Tis Hesperus—there he stands with glittering crown,
First admonition that the sun is down!
For yet it is broad daylight. Clouds pass by;
A few are near him still—and now the sky,
He hath it to himself—'tis all his own.
O most ambitious star! an inquest wrought
Within me when I recognized thy light;
A moment I was startled at the sight.
And while I gazed there came to me a thought
That I might step beyond my natural race
As thou seem'st now to do; might one day trace
Some ground not mine; and, strong her strength above,
My soul, an apparition in the place,
Tread there with steps that no one shall reprove!

1803 1807

*The thought of the latter part of this poem seems to express Wordsworth's high ambition, to write a poem inspired above everything he had yet accomplished. See *The Prelude,* Book I, page 249, lines 46ff.

4. *Hesperus,* the evening star.

TO H. C.*

SIX YEARS OLD

O thou! whose fancies from afar are brought;
Who of thy words dost make a mock apparel,
And fittest to unutterable thought
The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol;
Thou fairy voyager! that dost float
In such clear water that thy boat
May rather seem
To brood on air than on an earthly stream;
Suspended in a stream as clear as sky,
Where earth and heaven do make one imagery;
O blessed vision! happy child!
Thou art so exquisitely wild
I think of thee with many fears
For what may be thy lot in future years.

I thought of times when Pain might be thy guest,
Lord of thy house and hospitality;
And Grief, uneasy lover! never rest
But when she sat within the touch of thee.
O too industrious folly!
O vain and causeless melancholy!
Nature will either end thee quite,
Or, lengthening out thy season of delight,
Preserve for thee, by individual right,
A young lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks.
What hast thou to do with sorrow,
Or the injuries of tomorrow?
Thou art a dewdrop, which the morn brings forth,

*The lines are addressed to Hartley Coleridge (1796-1849), son of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Wordsworth's most intimate friend. The poet's forebodings were borne out in the boy's unfortunate after life.

Ill-fitted to sustain unkindly shocks,
Or to be trailed along the soiling earth;
A gem that glitters while it lives,
And no forewarning gives,
But, at the touch of wrong, without a strife
Slips in a moment out of life.

1802 1807

TO THE DAISY*

Her† divine skill taught me this,
That from everything I saw
I could some instruction draw,
And raise pleasure to the height
Through the meanest object's sight.
By the murmur of a spring,
Or the least bough's rustelling;
By a Daisy whose leaves spread
Shut when Titan‡ goes to bed;
Or a shady bush or tree;
She could more infuse in me
Than all Nature's beauties can
In some other wiser man.

G. WITHER§

In youth from rock to rock I went,
From hill to hill in discontent
Of pleasure high and turbulent,
Most pleased when most uneasy;
But now my own delights I make—
My thirst at every rill can slake,
And gladly Nature's love partake
Of thee, sweet daisy!

*It is well to compare this poem and "To the Same Flower," which follows, with Burns's "To a Mountain Daisy."

†*Her*, "his [Wither's] muse."—Wordsworth's note.

‡*Titan*, the sun.

§*Wither*, George (1588-1667), a minor English poet. The quotation is from "The Shepherd's Hunting."

Thee Winter in the garland wears
That thinly decks his few gray hairs;
Spring parts the clouds with softest airs,
That she may sun thee;
Whole summer fields are thine by right;
And Autumn, melancholy wight!
Doth in thy crimson head delight
When rains are on thee.

In shoals and bands, a morris train,
Thou greet'st the traveler in the lane;
Pleased at his greeting thee again—
Yet nothing daunted,
Nor grieved if thou be set at naught.
And oft alone in nooks remote
We meet thee, like a pleasant thought,
When such are wanted.

Be violets in their secret mews
The flowers the wanton zephyrs choose;
Proud be the rose, with rains and dews
Her head impearling,
Thou liv'st with less ambitious aim,
Yet hast not gone without thy fame;
Thou art indeed by many a claim
The poet's darling.

If to a rock from rains he fly,
Or, some bright day of April sky,
Imprisoned by hot sunshine lie
Near the green holly,

15. *crimson head.* The petals of the English daisy are often pinkish in color.
17. *morris*, an ancient dance, common at pageants and revelries.
25. *mews*, hiding places.

And wearily at length should fare,
He needs but look about, and there
Thou art!—a friend at hand, to scare
His melancholy.

A hundred times, by rock or bower,
Ere thus I have lain couched an hour,
Have I derived from thy sweet power
Some apprehension;
Some steady love; some brief delight;
Some memory that had taken flight;
Some chime of fancy wrong or right;
Or stray invention.

If stately passions in me burn,
And one chance look to thee should turn,
I drink out of an humbler urn
A lowlier pleasure;
The homely sympathy that heeds
The common life our nature breeds;
A wisdom fitted to the needs
Of hearts at leisure.

Fresh-smitten by the morning ray,
When thou art up, alert and gay,
Then, cheerful flower! my spirits play
With kindred gladness.
And when, at dusk, by dews oppressed,
Thou sink'st, the image of thy rest
Hath often eased my pensive breast
Of careful sadness.

And all day long I number yet,
All seasons through, another debt,
Which I, wherever thou art met,

To thee am owing;
An instinct call it, a blind sense;
A happy, genial influence,
Coming one knows not how, nor whence,
Nor whither going.

Child of the year! that round dost run
Thy pleasant course—when day's begun,
As ready to salute the sun
As lark or leveret,
Thy long-lost praise thou shalt regain;
Nor be less dear to future men
Than in old time—thou not in vain
Art Nature's favorite.

1802 1807

TO THE SAME FLOWER

With little here to do or see
Of things that in the great world be,
Daisy! again I talk to thee,
For thou art worthy,
Thou unassuming commonplace
Of Nature, with that homely face,
And yet with something of a grace
Which Love makes for thee!

Oft on the dappled turf at ease
I sit and play with similes,
Loose types of things through all degrees,
Thoughts of thy raising;
And many a fond and idle name
I give to thee, for praise or blame,

76. *leveret,* young hare.

As is the humor of the game,
While I am gazing.

A nun demure of lowly port;
Or sprightly maiden, of Love's court,
In thy simplicity the sport
Of all temptations;
A queen in crown of rubies dressed;
A starveling in a scanty vest;
Are all, as seems to suit thee best,
Thy appellations.

A little Cyclops with one eye
Staring to threaten and defy,
That thought comes next—and instantly
The freak is over,
The shape will vanish—and behold
A silver shield with boss of gold,
That spreads itself, some fairy bold
In fight to cover!

I see thee glittering from afar—
And then thou art a pretty star;
Not quite so fair as many are
In heaven above thee!
Yet like a star, with glittering crest,
Self-poised in air thou seem'st to rest—
May peace come never to his nest,
Who shall reprove thee!

Bright *flower!* for by that name at last,
When all my reveries are past,
I call thee, and to that cleave fast,
Sweet silent creature!
That breath'st with me in sun and air,

Do thou, as thou art wont, repair
My heart with gladness, and a share
Of thy meek nature!

1802 1807

THE GREEN LINNET

Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
Of spring's unclouded weather,
In this sequestered nook how sweet
To sit upon my orchard seat!
And birds and flowers once more to greet,
My last year's friends together.

One have I marked, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the blest—
Hail to thee, far above the rest
In joy of voice and pinion!
Thou, linnet! in thy green array,
Presiding spirit here today,
Dost lead the revels of the May;
And this is thy dominion.

While birds and butterflies and flowers
Make all one band of paramours,
Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,
Art sole in thy employment.
A life, a presence like the air,
Scattering thy gladness without care,
Too blest with anyone to pair;
Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstasies,
  Yet seeming still to hover;
There! where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
  That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,
A brother of the dancing leaves;
Then flits, and from the cottage eaves
  Pours forth his song in gushes;
As if by that exulting strain
He mocked and treated with disdain
The voiceless form he chose to feign,
  While fluttering in the bushes.

1803 1807

YEW TREES*

There is a yew tree, pride of Lorton Vale,
Which to this day stands single, in the midst
Of its own darkness, as it stood of yore;
Not loath to furnish weapons for the bands
Of Umfraville or Percy ere they marched

*Note the personification in this poem and compare it with the kind of personification that Wordsworth condemns in his *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (see pages 355-356).

1. *Lorton Vale,* a small valley a few miles south of Wordsworth's birthplace.

5. *Umfraville or Percy.* The Umfraville and Percy families frequently invaded Scotland in the medieval border warfare carried on between that country and England.

To Scotland's heaths; or those that crossed the sea
And drew their sounding bows at Azincour,
Perhaps at earlier Crécy, or Poitiers.
Of vast circumference and gloom profound
This solitary tree! a living thing
Produced too slowly ever to decay;
Of form and aspect too magnificent
To be destroyed. But worthier still of note
Are those fraternal four of Borrowdale,
Joined in one solemn and capacious grove;
Huge trunks! and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwisted fibers serpentine
Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved;
Nor uninformed with fantasy, and looks
That threaten the profane; a pillared shade,
Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue,
By sheddings from the pining umbrage tinged
Perennially—beneath whose sable roof
Of boughs, as if for festal purpose decked
With unrejoicing berries—ghostly shapes
May meet at noontide; Fear and trembling Hope,
Silence and Foresight; Death the skeleton
And Time the shadow—there to celebrate,
As in a natural temple scattered o'er
With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,
United worship; or in mute repose
To lie, and listen to the mountain flood
Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves.

1803 1815

7-8. *Azincour, Crécy . . . Poitiers,* medieval battles between the English and the French, in which, especially at Crécy, the English success was due largely to the use of the long bow of yew. *Azincour* is now spelled *Agincourt.*

14. *Borrowdale,* a valley northwest of Grasmere. The trees still stand.

33. *Glaramara,* a mountain at the head of Borrowdale.

DEPARTURE

FROM THE VALE OF GRASMERE. AUGUST, 1803*

The gentlest shade that walked Elysian plains
Might sometimes covet dissoluble chains;
Even for the tenants of the zone that lies
Beyond the stars, celestial paradise,
Methinks 'twould heighten joy, to overleap
At will the crystal battlements, and peep
Into some other region, though less fair,
To see how things are made and managed there.
Change for the worse might please, incursion bold
Into the tracts of darkness and of cold,
O'er Limbo Lake with airy flight to steer,
And on the verge of Chaos hang in fear.
Such animation often do I find,
Power in my breast, wings growing in my mind,
Then, when some rock or hill is overpassed,
Perchance without one look behind me cast,
Some barrier with which Nature, from the birth
Of things, has fenced this fairest spot on earth.
O pleasant transit, Grasmere! to resign
Such happy fields, abodes so calm as thine;
Not like an outcast with himself at strife;
The slave of business, time, or care for life,

*From August 14 until September 25, 1803, William and Dorothy Wordsworth made a tour in Scotland by carriage and afoot, Coleridge accompanying them part of the time. The events noted by Dorothy in her *Journal* are of great interest in connection with the reading of the above poem and the seven poems following it, all from *Memorials of a Tour in Scotland*. They were written either during the journey or under its inspiration.

11. Wordsworth here alludes to the flight of Satan from Hell to Earth through Chaos (*Paradise Lost*, II, 890-III, 528). Milton's cosmography placed Hell as the lowest region of creation, between which and the spherical universe above it, containing earth, sun, planets, and fixed stars, was Chaos, a region of the unorganized elements of creation. In the upper part of Chaos, surmounting the upper part of the universe, was Limbo, not differing from the rest except as it was afterwards the abode of the vain and deluded spirits from earth—the Paradise of Fools (*Paradise Lost*, III, 495).

But moved by choice; or, if constrained in part,
Yet still with Nature's freedom at the heart—
To cull contentment upon wildest shores,
And luxuries extract from bleakest moors;
With prompt embrace all beauty to enfold,
And having rights in all that we behold.
—Then why these lingering steps?—A bright adieu,
For a brief absence, proves that love is true;
Ne'er can the way be irksome or forlorn
That winds into itself for sweet return.

1811 1827

AT THE GRAVE OF BURNS

1803

SEVEN YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH

I shiver, spirit fierce and bold,
At thought of what I now behold—
As vapors breathed from dungeons cold
Strike pleasure dead,
So sadness comes from out the mold
Where Burns is laid.

And have I then thy bones so near,
And thou forbidden to appear?
As if it were thyself that's here
I shrink with pain;
And both my wishes and my fear
Alike are vain.

6. Burns is buried at Dumfries.

Off weight—nor press on weight!—away
Dark thoughts!—they came, but not to stay;
With chastened feelings would I pay
The tribute due
To him, and aught that hides his clay
From mortal view.

Fresh as the flower whose modest worth
He sang, his genius "glinted" forth,
Rose like a star that touching earth,
For so it seems,
Doth glorify its humble birth
With matchless beams.

The piercing eye, the thoughtful brow,
The struggling heart, where be they now?—
Full soon the aspirant of the plow,
The prompt, the brave,
Slept, with the obscurest, in the low
And silent grave.

I mourned with thousands, but as one
More deeply grieved, for he was gone
Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
And showed my youth
How verse may build a princely throne
On humble truth.

Alas! where'er the current tends,
Regret pursues and with it blends—

20. *glinted.* See Burns's "To a Mountain Daisy":

"Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm."

Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends
By Skiddaw seen—
Neighbors we were, and loving friends
We might have been;

True friends though diversely inclined;
But heart with heart and mind with mind,
Where the main fibers are entwined,
Through Nature's skill,
May even by contraries be joined
More closely still.

The tear will start, and let it flow;
Thou "poor inhabitant below,"
At this dread moment—even so—
Might we together
Have sat and talked where gowans blow
Or on wild heather.

What treasures would have then been placed
Within my reach; of knowledge graced
By fancy what a rich repast!
But why go on?—
Oh! spare to sweep, thou mournful blast,
His grave grass-grown.

39-40. *Criffel . . . Skiddaw.* Criffel, a mountain in Kirkcudbright, near Burns's later home, and Skiddaw, in the "Lake Country," are less than thirty miles apart.

47. *joined.* Throughout the eighteenth century words of the *oi* sound were customarily pronounced as riming with *mind.*

50. *poor inhabitant below.* See Burns's "A Bard's Epitaph":

"The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow
And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low
And stained his name."

53. *gowans,* daisies.

There, too, a son, his joy and pride
(Not three weeks past the stripling died),
Lies gathered to his father's side,
Soul-moving sight!
Yet one to which is not denied
Some sad delight.

For *he* is safe, a quiet bed
Hath early found among the dead,
Harbored where none can be misled,
Wronged, or distressed;
And surely here it may be said
That such are blessed.

And, oh, for thee, by pitying grace
Checked ofttimes in a devious race,
May He, who halloweth the place
Where man is laid,
Receive thy spirit in the embrace
For which it prayed!

Sighing I turned away; but ere
Night fell I heard, or seemed to hear,
Music that sorrow comes not near,
A ritual hymn,
Chanted in love that casts out fear
By seraphim.

Composed partly before 1807 1842

THOUGHTS

SUGGESTED THE DAY FOLLOWING, ON THE BANKS OF NITH, NEAR THE POET'S RESIDENCE*

Too frail to keep the lofty vow
That must have followed when his brow
Was wreathed—"The Vision" tells us how—
With holly spray,
He faltered, drifted to and fro,
And passed away.

Well might such thoughts, dear sister, throng
Our minds when, lingering all too long,
Over the grave of Burns we hung
In social grief—
Indulged as if it were a wrong
To seek relief.

But, leaving each unquiet theme
Where gentlest judgments may misdeem,
And prompt to welcome every gleam
Of good and fair,
Let us beside the limpid stream
Breathe hopeful air.

Enough of sorrow, wreck, and blight;
Think rather of those moments bright
When to the consciousness of right
His course was true,
When wisdom prospered in his sight
And virtue grew.

*Burns's last farm home, Ellisland, on the bank of the Nith a few miles north of Dumfries, was the scene of the happiest of the poet's years. Here he wrote "Tam O' Shanter."

3. *The Vision*, a poem in which Burns dreamed that he was crowned by the muse of Scotland with a wreath of holly.

Yes, freely let our hearts expand,
Freely as in youth's season bland,
When side by side, his book in hand,
We wont to stray,
Our pleasure varying at command
Of each sweet lay.

How oft inspired must he have trod
These pathways, yon far-stretching road!
There lurks his home; in that abode,
With mirth elate,
Or in his nobly-pensive mood,
The rustic sate.

Proud thoughts that image overawes,
Before it humbly let us pause,
And ask of Nature from what cause
And by what rules
She trained her Burns to win applause
That shames the schools.

Through busiest street and loneliest glen
Are felt the flashes of his pen;
He rules 'mid winter snows, and when
Bees fill their hives;
Deep in the general heart of men
His power survives.

What need of fields in some far clime
Where heroes, sages, bards sublime,
And all that fetched the flowing rime
From genuine springs,
Shall dwell together till old Time
Folds up his wings?

Sweet Mercy! to the gates of heaven
This minstrel lead, his sins forgiven;
The rueful conflict, the heart riven
With vain endeavor,
And memory of earth's bitter leaven,
Effaced forever.

But why to him confine the prayer,
When kindred thoughts and yearnings bear
On the frail heart the purest share
With all that live?—
The best of what we do and are,
Just God, forgive!

Finished 1839 1842

TO A HIGHLAND GIRL

AT INVERSNEYDE, UPON LOCH LOMOND*

Sweet Highland girl, a very shower
Of beauty is thy earthly dower!
Twice seven consenting years have shed
Their utmost bounty on thy head.
And these gray rocks; that household lawn;
Those trees, a veil just half withdrawn;
This fall of water that doth make
A murmur near the silent lake;
This little bay; a quiet road
That holds in shelter thy abode—
In truth together do ye seem
Like something fashioned in a dream;

*See Appendix, page 402.

Such forms as from their covert peep
When earthly cares are laid asleep!
But, O fair creature! in the light
Of common day, so heavenly bright,
I bless thee, vision as thou art,
I bless thee with a human heart;
God shield thee to thy latest years!
Thee, neither know I, nor thy peers;
And yet my eyes are filled with tears.

With earnest feeling I shall pray
For thee when I am far away;
For never saw I mien, or face,
In which more plainly I could trace
Benignity and home-bred sense
Ripening in perfect innocence.
Here scattered, like a random seed,
Remote from men, thou dost not need
The embarrassed look of shy distress,
And maidenly shamefacedness.
Thou wear'st upon thy forehead clear
The freedom of a mountaineer—
A face with gladness overspread!
Soft smiles, by human kindness bred!
And seemliness complete, that sways
Thy courtesies, about thee plays,
With no restraint, but such as springs
From quick and eager visitings
Of thoughts that lie beyond the reach
Of thy few words of English speech—
A bondage sweetly brooked, a strife
That gives thy gestures grace and life!
So have I, not unmoved in mind,
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind
Thus beating up against the wind.

What hand but would a garland cull
For thee who art so beautiful?
O happy pleasure! here to dwell
Beside thee in some heathy dell;
Adopt your homely ways, and dress,
A shepherd, thou a shepherdess!
But I could frame a wish for thee
More like a grave reality.
Thou art to me but as a wave
Of the wild sea; and I would have
Some claim upon thee, if I could,
Though but of common neighborhood.
What joy to hear thee, and to see!
Thy elder brother I would be,
Thy father—anything to thee!

Now thanks to Heaven! that of its grace
Hath led me to this lonely place.
Joy have I had; and going hence
I bear away my recompense.
In spots like these it is we prize
Our memory, feel that she hath eyes.
Then, why should I be loath to stir?
I feel this place was made for her;
To give new pleasure like the past,
Continued long as life shall last.
Nor am I loath, though pleased at heart,
Sweet Highland girl! from thee to part;
For I, methinks, till I grow old,
As fair before me shall behold,
As I do now, the cabin small,
The lake, the bay, the waterfall—
And thee, the spirit of them all!

1803 1807

STEPPING WESTWARD

While my fellow-traveler and I were walking by the side of Loch Ketterine, one fine evening after sunset, in our road to a hut where, in the course of our tour, we had been hospitably entertained some weeks before, we met, in one of the loneliest parts of that solitary region, two well-dressed women, one of whom said to us, by way of greeting, "What, you are stepping westward?"

"What, you are stepping westward?"—"Yea."
—'Twould be a *wildish* destiny,
If we, who thus together roam
In a strange land, and far from home,
Were in this place the guests of chance—
Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,
Though home or shelter he had none,
With such a sky to lead him on?

The dewy ground was dark and cold;
Behind, all gloomy to behold;
And stepping westward seemed to be
A kind of *heavenly* destiny.
I liked the greeting; 'twas a sound
Of something without place or bound,
And seemed to give me spiritual right
To travel through that region bright.

The voice was soft, and she who spake
Was walking by her native lake;
The salutation had to me
The very sound of courtesy.
Its power was felt; and while my eye
Was fixed upon the glowing sky,
The echo of the voice enwrought
A human sweetness with the thought

Of traveling through the world, that lay
Before me in my endless way.

1803-1805 1807

THE SOLITARY REAPER*

Behold her, single, in the field,
Yon solitary Highland lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travelers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands.
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In springtime from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow

*The poem is founded partly on observation by Wordsworth and his sister, but it was more directly inspired by the manuscript "A Tour in Scotland" of Thomas Wilkinson, an acquaintance. The particular passage on which Wordsworth based his poem reads as follows: "Passed a female who was reaping alone. She sung in Erse, as she bended over her sickle—the sweetest human voice I ever heard. Her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more."

In lines 18-20 Wordsworth attains the combination of rare melody and haunting suggestiveness that is ever the search of the poet.

For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago.
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of today?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending.
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

1803-1805 1807

ROB ROY'S GRAVE*

The history of Rob Roy is sufficiently known; his grave is near the head of Loch Ketterine, in one of those small pinfold-like burial-grounds, of neglected and desolate appearance, which the traveler meets with in the Highlands of Scotland.

A famous man is Robin Hood,
The English ballad-singer's joy!
And Scotland has a thief as good,
An outlaw of as daring mood—

She has her brave Rob Roy!
Then clear the weeds from off his grave,

*Wordsworth was misinformed as to the exact place of burial of Rob Roy Macgregor, the Highland freebooter, who died in 1734.
The poet does not condone force, but he is at least able to see the point of view that would condone in the robber's own mind his deeds of violence.

And let us chant a passing stave,
In honor of that hero brave!

Heaven gave Rob Roy a dauntless heart
And wondrous length and strength of arm;
Nor craved he more to quell his foes
Or keep his friends from harm.

Yet was Rob Roy as *wise* as brave
(Forgive me if the phrase be strong—
A poet worthy of Rob Roy
Must scorn a timid song).

Say, then, that he was wise as brave,
As wise in thought as bold in deed;
For in the principles of things
He sought his moral creed.

Said generous Rob, "What need of books?
Burn all the statutes and their shelves;
They stir us up against our kind—
And worse, against ourselves.

"We have a passion—make a law,
Too false to guide us or control!
And for the law itself we fight
In bitterness of soul.

"And, puzzled, blinded thus, we lose
Distinctions that are plain and few;
These find I graven on my heart—
That tells me what to do.

"The creatures see of flood and field,
And those that travel on the wind!

With them no strife can last; they live
In peace, and peace of mind.

"For why?—because the good old rule
Sufficeth them, the simple plan,
That they should take, who have the power,
And they should keep who can.

"A lesson that is quickly learned,
A signal this which all can see!
Thus nothing here provokes the strong
To wanton cruelty.

"All freakishness of mind is checked;
He tamed, who foolishly aspires;
While to the measure of his might
Each fashions his desires.

"All kinds, and creatures, stand and fall
By strength of prowess or of wit—
'Tis God's appointment who must sway,
And who is to submit.

"Since, then, the rule of right is plain,
And longest life is but a day,
To have my ends, maintain my rights,
I'll take the shortest way."

And thus among these rocks he lived,
Through summer heat and winter snow;
The eagle, he was lord above,
And Rob was lord below.

So was it—*would*, at least, have been
But through untowardness of fate;

For polity was then too strong—
He came an age too late;

Or shall we say an age too soon?
For, were the bold man living *now*,
How might he flourish in his pride,
With buds on every bough!

Then rents and factors, rights of chase,
Sheriffs, and lairds and their domains,
Would all have seemed but paltry things,
Not worth a moment's pains.

Rob Roy had never lingered here,
To these few meager vales confined;
But thought how wide the world, the times
How fairly to his mind!

And to his sword he would have said,
"Do thou my sovereign will enact
From land to land through half the earth!
Judge thou of law and fact!

" 'Tis fit that we should do our part,
Becoming that mankind should learn
That we are not to be surpassed
In fatherly concern.

"Of old things all are over old,
Of good things none are good enough—
We'll show that we can help to frame
A world of other stuff.

69. *factors*, agents, as of a landlord.
70. *lairds*, Scotch title for those who own hereditary estates, generally rented to tenants.

"I, too, will have my kings that take
From me the sign of life and death;
Kingdoms shall shift about, like clouds,
Obedient to my breath."

And, if the word had been fulfilled,
As *might* have been, then, thought of joy!
France would have had her present boast,
And we our own Rob Roy!

Oh! say not so; compare them not;
I would not wrong thee, champion brave!
Would wrong thee nowhere, least of all
Here standing by thy grave.

For thou, although with some wild thoughts,
Wild chieftain of a savage clan!
Hadst this to boast of; thou didst love
The *liberty* of man.

And, had it been thy lot to live
With us who now behold the light,
Thou wouldst have nobly stirred thyself,
And battled for the right.

For thou wert still the poor man's stay,
The poor man's heart, the poor man's hand;
And all the oppressed, who wanted strength,
Had thine at their command.

Bear witness many a pensive sigh
Of thoughtful herdsman when he strays
Alone upon Loch Veol's heights,
And by Loch Lomond's braes!

And, far and near, through vale and hill,
Are faces that attest the same;
The proud heart flashing through the eyes,
At sound of Rob Roy's name.

September, 1803-April, 1805 1807

YARROW UNVISITED*

See the various poems the scene of which is laid upon the banks of the Yarrow; in particular, the exquisite ballad of Hamilton beginning—

"Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny, bonny bride,
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome marrow!"

From Stirling Castle we had seen
The mazy Forth unraveled;
Had trod the banks of Clyde and Tay,
And with the Tweed had traveled;
And when we came to Clovenford,
Then said my *"winsome marrow,"*
"Whate'er betide, we'll turn aside,
And see the braes of Yarrow."

"Let Yarrow folk, *frae* Selkirk town,
Who have been buying, selling,
Go back to Yarrow ('tis their own),
Each maiden to her dwelling!
On Yarrow's banks let herons feed,
Hares couch, and rabbits burrow!
But we will downward with the Tweed,
Nor turn aside to Yarrow.

*The Vale of Yarrow, famous for its beauty, and all the places mentioned in the poem, are in the "Walter Scott Country" of south-eastern Scotland.

6. *marrow*, companion; here, Dorothy Wordsworth.
9. *frae*, from.

"There's Galla Water, Leader Haughs,
Both lying right before us;
And Dryborough, where with chiming Tweed
The lintwhites sing in chorus;
There's pleasant Tiviot Dale, a land
Made blithe with plow and harrow.
Why throw away a needful day
To go in search of Yarrow?

"What's Yarrow but a river bare,
That glides the dark hills under?
There are a thousand such elsewhere
As worthy of your wonder."
—Strange words they seemed of slight and scorn;
My true love sighed for sorrow,
And looked me in the face, to think
I thus could speak of Yarrow!

"Oh! green," said I, "are Yarrow's holms,
And sweet is Yarrow flowing!
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,
But we will leave it growing.
O'er hilly path, and open strath,
We'll wander Scotland thorough;
But, though so near, we will not turn
Into the dale of Yarrow.

"Let beeves and homebred kine partake
The sweets of Burn-mill meadow;
The swan on still St. Mary's Lake
Float double, swan and shadow!
We will not see them; will not go,
Today, nor yet tomorrow;
Enough if in our hearts we know
There's such a place as Yarrow.

"Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown!
It must, or we shall rue it.
We have a vision of our own;
Ah! why should we undo it?
The treasured dreams of times long past,
We'll keep them, winsome marrow!
For when we're there, although 'tis fair,
'Twill be another Yarrow!

"If care with freezing years should come,
And wandering seem but folly—
Should we be loath to stir from home,
And yet be melancholy;
Should life be dull, and spirits low,
'Twill soothe us in our sorrow,
That earth hath something yet to show,
The bonny holms of Yarrow!"

1803 1807

"SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT"*

She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely apparition sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;
Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From Maytime and the cheerful dawn;
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

*There seems the best of evidence to show that this poem was written as a tribute to Mary Wordsworth, the poet's wife.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveler between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.

1804 1807

"I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD"*

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils,
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

*See Appendix, page 403.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay—
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee.
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company.
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought.

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

1804 1807

THE KITTEN AND FALLING LEAVES

That way look, my infant, lo!
What a pretty baby show!
See the kitten on the wall,
Sporting with the leaves that fall,
Withered leaves—one—two—and three—
From the lofty elder tree!
Through the calm and frosty air
Of this morning bright and fair,

1. *my infant,* Dora Wordsworth, the poet's daughter, born August 16, 1804.

Eddying round and round they sink,
Softly, slowly. One might think,
From the motions that are made,
Every little leaf conveyed
Sylph or fairy hither tending—
To this lower world descending,
Each invisible and mute,
In his wavering parachute.
——But the kitten, how she starts,
Crouches, stretches, paws, and darts!
First at one, and then its fellow,
Just as light and just as yellow;
There are many now—now one—
Now they stop and there are none.
What intenseness of desire
In her upward eye of fire!
With a tiger-leap half way
Now she meets the coming prey,
Lets it go as fast, and then
Has it in her power again.
Now she works with three or four,
Like an Indian conjurer;
Quick as he in feats of art,
Far beyond in joy of heart.
Were her antics played in the eye
Of a thousand standers-by,
Clapping hands with shout and stare,
What would little Tabby care
For the plaudits of the crowd?
Over-happy to be proud,
Over-wealthy in the treasure
Of her own exceeding pleasure!

'Tis a pretty baby treat;
Nor, I deem, for me unmeet;

Here, for neither babe nor me,
Other playmate can I see.
Of the countless living things,
That with stir of feet and wings
(In the sun or under shade,
Upon bough or grassy blade)
And with busy revelings,
Chirp and song, and murmurings,
Made this orchard's narrow space,
And this vale, so blithe a place;
Multitudes are swept away
Never more to breathe the day.
Some are sleeping; some in bands
Traveled into distant lands;
Others slunk to moor and wood,
Far from human neighborhood;
And among the kinds that keep
With us closer fellowship,
With us openly abide,
All have laid their mirth aside.

Where is he, that giddy sprite,
Blue-cap, with his colors bright,
Who was blest as bird could be,
Feeding in the apple tree;
Made such wanton spoil and rout,
Turning blossoms inside out;
Hung—head pointing toward the ground—
Fluttered, perched, into a round
Bound himself, and then unbound;
Lithest, gaudiest harlequin!
Prettiest tumbler ever seen!
Light of heart and light of limb;
What is now become of him?
Lambs, that through the mountains went

Frisking, bleating merriment,
When the year was in its prime,
They are sobered by this time.
If you look to vale or hill,
If you listen, all is still,
Save a little neighboring rill,
That from out the rocky ground
Strikes a solitary sound.
Vainly glitter hill and plain,
And the air is calm in vain;
Vainly morning spreads the lure
Of a sky serene and pure;
Creature none can she decoy
Into open sign of joy.
Is it that they have a fear
Of the dreary season near?
Or that other pleasures be
Sweeter even than gayety?

Yet, whate'er enjoyments dwell
In the impenetrable cell
Of the silent heart which Nature
Furnishes to every creature;
Whatsoe'er we feel and know
Too sedate for outward show,
Such a light of gladness breaks,
Pretty kitten! from thy freaks—
Spreads with such a living grace
O'er my little Dora's face;
Yes, the sight so stirs and charms
Thee, baby, laughing in my arms,
That almost I could repine
That your transports are not mine,
That I do not wholly fare
Even as ye do, thoughtless pair!

And I will have my careless season
Spite of melancholy reason,
Will walk through life in such a way
That, when time brings on decay,
Now and then I may possess
Hours of perfect gladsomeness.
—Pleased by any random toy;
By a kitten's busy joy,
Or an infant's laughing eye
Sharing in the ecstasy;
I would fare like that or this,
Find my wisdom in my bliss;
Keep the sprightly soul awake,
And have faculties to take,
Even from things by sorrow wrought,
Matter for a jocund thought,
Spite of care, and spite of grief,
To gambol with life's falling leaf.

1804 1807

THE SMALL CELANDINE*

There is a flower, the lesser celandine,
That shrinks, like many more, from cold and rain;
And, the first moment that the sun may shine,
Bright as the sun himself, 'tis out again!

When hailstones have been falling, swarm on swarm,
Or blasts the green field and the trees distressed,
Oft have I seen it muffled up from harm,
In close self-shelter, like a thing at rest.

*Wordsworth seldom draws, as he does in this poem, a direct "moral" from nature.

But lately, one rough day, this flower I passed
And recognized it, though an altered form,
Now standing forth an offering to the blast,
And buffeted at will by rain and storm.

I stopped, and said with inly-muttered voice,
"It doth not love the shower, nor seek the cold;
This neither is its courage nor its choice,
But its necessity in being old.

"The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew;
It cannot help itself in its decay;
Stiff in its members, withered, changed of hue."
And, in my spleen, I smiled that it was gray.

To be a prodigal's favorite—then, worse truth,
A miser's pensioner—behold our lot!
O man, that from thy fair and shining youth
Age might but take the things youth needed not!

1804 1807

ODE TO DUTY*

"Jam non consilio bonus, sed more eō perductus, ut non tantum rectē facere possim, sed nisi rectē facere non possim."

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!
O Duty! if that name thou love
Who art a light to guide, a rod

*The poem follows in form Gray's "Ode to Adversity," and like that poem is founded upon Horace's "Ode to Fortune." The motto may be translated: "Now I am urged on, not by good resolution, but rather by custom; so that it is not that I am able to do right, but that I am not able to do wrong."

To check the erring, and reprove;
Thou, who art victory and law
When empty terrors overawe;
From vain temptations dost set free;
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!

There are who ask not if thine eye
Be on them; who, in love and truth,
Where no misgiving is, rely
Upon the genial sense of youth.
Glad hearts! without reproach or blot;
Who do thy work, and know it not—
Oh! if through confidence misplaced
They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power, around them cast.

Serene will be our days and bright,
And happy will our nature be,
When love is an unerring light,
And joy its own security.
And they a blissful course may hold
Even now, who, not unwisely bold,
Live in the spirit of this creed,
Yet seek thy firm support, according to their need.

I, loving freedom, and untried,
No sport of every random gust,
Yet being to myself a guide,
Too blindly have reposed my trust.
And oft, when in my heart was heard
Thy timely mandate, I deferred
The task, in smoother walks to stray;
But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may.

Through no disturbance of my soul,
Or strong compunction in me wrought,
I supplicate for thy control,
But in the quietness of thought.
Me this unchartered freedom tires;
I feel the weight of chance desires.
My hopes no more must change their name;
I long for a repose that ever is the same.

Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face.
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh and strong.

To humbler functions, awful Power!
I call thee. I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour;
Oh, let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice;
The confidence of reason give;
And in the light of truth thy bondman let me live!

1805 1807

TO A SKYLARK*

Up with me! up with me into the clouds!
For thy song, lark, is strong;
Up with me, up with me into the clouds!
Singing, singing,
With clouds and sky about thee ringing,
Lift me, guide me, till I find
That spot which seems so to thy mind!

I have walked through wildernesses dreary,
And today my heart is weary;
Had I now the wings of a fairy,
Up to thee would I fly.
There is madness about thee, and joy divine
In that song of thine;
Lift me, guide me, high and high
To thy banqueting place in the sky.

Joyous as morning,
Thou art laughing and scorning;
Thou hast a nest for thy love and thy rest,
And, though little troubled with sloth,
Drunken lark! thou wouldst be loath
To be such a traveler as I.
Happy, happy liver,
With a soul as strong as a mountain river
Pouring out praise to the Almighty Giver,
Joy and jollity be with us both!

Alas! my journey, rugged and uneven,
Through prickly moors or dusty ways must wind;
But hearing thee, or others of thy kind,

*Compare with Shelley's "To a Skylark," written in 1820.

As full of gladness and as free of heaven,
I, with my fate contented, will plod on,
And hope for higher raptures, when life's day is done.

1805 1807

FIDELITY*

A barking sound the shepherd hears,
A cry as of a dog or fox;
He halts and searches with his eyes
Among the scattered rocks;
And now at distance can discern
A stirring in a brake of fern;
And instantly a dog is seen,
Glancing through that covert green.

The dog is not of mountain breed;
Its motions, too, are wild and shy;
With something, as the shepherd thinks,
Unusual in its cry.
Nor is there anyone in sight
All round, in hollow or on height;
Nor shout, nor whistle strikes his ear;
What is the creature doing here?

It was a cove, a huge recess,
That keeps, till June, December's snow;

*The poem is a literal transcript of fact, except that Wordsworth has shifted the scene from north of Helvellyn to the wild and lonely scene about Red Tarn at the east of the mountain. Charles Gough, a sportsman, was killed early in April, and his body was found July 22, 1805. Wordsworth said that he "purposely made the narrative as prosaic as possible, in order that no discredit might be thrown on the truth of the incident." Sir Walter Scott wrote a poem, "Helvellyn," on the same incident in 1805.

A lofty precipice in front,
A silent tarn below!
Far in the bosom of Helvellyn,
Remote from public road or dwelling,
Pathway, or cultivated land,
From trace of human foot or hand.

There sometimes doth a leaping fish
Send through the tarn a lonely cheer;
The crags repeat the raven's croak,
In symphony austere;
Thither the rainbow comes—the cloud—
And mists that spread the flying shroud;
And sunbeams; and the sounding blast,
That, if it could, would hurry past;
But that enormous barrier holds it fast.

Not free from boding thoughts, a while
The shepherd stood; then makes his way
O'er rocks and stones, following the dog
As quickly as he may;
Nor far had gone before he found
A human skeleton on the ground;
The appalled discoverer with a sigh
Looks round, to learn the history.

From those abrupt and perilous rocks
The man had fallen, that place of fear!
At length upon the shepherd's mind
It breaks, and all is clear:
He instantly recalled the name,

20. *tarn.* "Tarn is a *small* mere or lake, mostly high up in the mountains."—Wordsworth's note.

And who he was, and whence he came;
Remembered, too, the very day
On which the traveler passed this way.

But hear a wonder, for whose sake
This lamentable tale I tell!
A lasting monument of words
This wonder merits well.
The dog, which still was hovering nigh,
Repeating the same timid cry,
This dog had been through three months' space
A dweller in that savage place.

Yes, proof was plain that since the day
When this ill-fated traveler died
The dog had watched about the spot,
Or by his master's side.
How nourished here through such long time
He knows who gave that love sublime;
And gave that strength of feeling, great
Above all human estimate!

1805 1807

ELEGIAC STANZAS

SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE OF PEELE CASTLE, IN A STORM, PAINTED BY SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT*

I was thy neighbor once, thou rugged pile!
Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee.
I saw thee every day; and all the while
Thy form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air!
So like, so very like, was day to day!
Whene'er I looked, thy image still was there;
It trembled, but it never passed away.

How perfect was the calm! it seemed no sleep;
No mood, which season takes away, or brings—
I could have fancied that the mighty deep
Was even the gentlest of all gentle things.

Ah! then if mine had been the painter's hand,
To express what then I saw, and add the gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land,
The consecration, and the poet's dream,

I would have planted thee, thou hoary pile,
Amid a world how different from this!

*This, like the two following poems, was in memory of Wordsworth's brother John. Sir George Beaumont was Wordsworth's life-long friend and benefactor. Peele, or Piel, Castle is off the coast of Lancashire near the entrance to Morecambe Bay, and not far from Furness Abbey. Wordsworth was very familiar with the region as a boy and a young man.

15-16. It seems strange that for these lines, which stand among the great lines of all nineteenth century poetry, Wordsworth should have substituted in 1820,

"The luster known to neither sea nor land,
But borrowed from the youthful poet's dream."

Wordsworth restored the original reading in 1832.

Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss.

Thou shouldst have seemed a treasure-house divine
Of peaceful years; a chronicle of heaven;
Of all the sunbeams that did ever shine
The very sweetest had to thee been given.

A picture had it been of lasting ease,
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,
Such picture would I at that time have made—
And seen the soul of truth in every part,
A steadfast peace that might not be betrayed.

So once it would have been—'tis so no more;
I have submitted to a new control.
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanized my soul.

Not for a moment could I now behold
A smiling sea, and be what I have been.
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

Then, Beaumont, friend! who would have been the friend,
If he had lived, of him whom I deplore,
This work of thine I blame not, but commend;
This sea in anger, and that dismal shore.

O 'tis a passionate work!—yet wise and well,
Well chosen is the spirit that is here;
That hulk which labors in the deadly swell,
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!

And this huge castle, standing here sublime,
I love to see the look with which it braves,
Cased in the unfeeling armor of old time,
The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
Such happiness, wherever it be known,
Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

1805 1807

53-54. Wordsworth acknowledges what was probably his greatest intellectual and emotional fault. He here feels that it can be his no longer.

ELEGIAC VERSES

IN MEMORY OF MY BROTHER, JOHN WORDSWORTH*

Commander of the E. I. Company's Ship, *The Earl of Abergavenny,* in which he perished by calamitous shipwreck, February 6th, 1805. Composed near the mountain track that leads from Grasmere through Grisdale Hawes, where it descends towards Patterdale.

The sheep-boy whistled loud, and lo!
That instant, startled by the shock,
The buzzard mounted from the rock
Deliberate and slow.
Lord of the air, he took his flight;
Oh! could he on that woeful night
Have lent his wing, my brother dear,
For one poor moment's space to thee,
And all who struggled with the sea,
When safety was so near.

Thus in the weakness of my heart
I spoke (but let that pang be still)
When rising from the rock at will,
I saw the bird depart.
And let me calmly bless the Power
That meets me in this unknown flower,
Affecting type of him I mourn!
With calmness suffer and believe,
And grieve, and know that I must grieve,
Not cheerless, though forlorn.

*John Wordsworth had spent the winter and summer with William while his ship was refitting. As he set out on his journey, returning to the south of England, William walked with him the four miles to Grisedale Tarn, on the flank of Helvellyn. Here, on a boulder hard by where they parted, have now been engraved the first four lines of Stanzas III and IV. The flower of Stanza VI is the moss campion, *silene acaulis.*

Here did we stop; and here looked round
While each into himself descends,
For that last thought of parting friends
That is not to be found.
Hidden was Grasmere Vale from sight,
Our home and his, his heart's delight,
His quiet heart's selected home.
But time before him melts away,
And he hath feeling of a day
Of blessedness to come.

Full soon in sorrow did I weep,
Taught that the mutual hope was dust,
In sorrow, but for higher trust,
How miserably deep!
All vanished in a single word,
A breath, a sound, and scarcely heard.
Sea—ship—drowned—shipwrecked—so it came,
The meek, the brave, the good, was gone;
He who had been our living John
Was nothing but a name.

That was indeed a parting! oh,
Glad am I, glad that it is past;
For there were some on whom it cast
Unutterable woe.
But they as well as I have gains—
From many a humble source, to pains
Like these, there comes a mild release;
Even here I feel it, even this plant
Is in its beauty ministrant
To comfort and to peace.

He would have loved thy modest grace,
Meek flower! To him I would have said,

"It grows upon its native bed
Beside our parting-place;
There, cleaving to the ground, it lies
With multitude of purple eyes,
Spangling a cushion green like moss;
But we will see it, joyful tide!
Some day, to see it in its pride,
The mountain will we cross."

—Brother and friend, if verse of mine
Have power to make thy virtues known,
Here let a monumental stone
Stand—sacred as a shrine;
And to the few who pass this way,
Traveler or shepherd, let it say,
Long as these mighty rocks endure—
Oh, do not thou too fondly brood,
Although deserving of all good,
On any earthly hope, however pure!

1805 1842

CHARACTER OF THE HAPPY WARRIOR*

Who is the happy warrior? Who is he
That every man in arms should wish to be?
—It is the generous spirit, who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought

*A hundred years before Wordsworth's time, "characters" or character sketches, usually in prose, were often written describing the typical characters of classes of men such as judges, fops, courtiers. These were among the forerunners of modern fiction and led the way to such vivid characterization as we find in Addison's *Spectator* of 1712. There is something of the same genus of literature in the present poem, though the poem is given point as inspired by Wordsworth's memory of his sea-captain brother and also, especially, by the death of Nelson at Trafalgar in 1805.

Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought;
Whose high endeavors are an inward light
That makes the path before him always bright;
Who, with a natural instinct to discern
What knowledge can perform, is diligent to learn;
Abides by this resolve, and stops not there,
But makes his moral being his prime care;
Who, doomed to go in company with pain
And fear and bloodshed, miserable train!
Turns his necessity to glorious gain;
In face of these doth exercise a power
Which is our human nature's highest dower;
Controls them and subdues, transmutes, bereaves
Of their bad influence, and their good receives:
By objects, which might force the soul to abate
Her feeling, rendered more compassionate;
Is placable—because occasions rise
So often that demand such sacrifice;
More skillful in self-knowledge, even more pure,
As tempted more; more able to endure,
As more exposed to suffering and distress;
Thence, also, more alive to tenderness.
—'Tis he whose law is reason; who depends
Upon that law as on the best of friends;
Whence, in a state where men are tempted still
To evil for a guard against worse ill,
And what in quality or act is best
Doth seldom on a right foundation rest,
He labors good on good to fix, and owes
To virtue every triumph that he knows;
—Who, if he rise to station of command,
Rises by open means; and there will stand
On honorable terms, or else retire,
And in himself possess his own desire;

Who comprehends his trust, and to the same
Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim;
And therefore does not stoop, nor lie in wait
For wealth, or honors, or for worldly state;
Whom they must follow; on whose head must fall,
Like showers of manna, if they come at all;
Whose powers shed round him in the common strife,
Or mild concerns of ordinary life,
A constant influence, a peculiar grace;
But who, if he be called upon to face
Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined
Great issues, good or bad for human kind,
Is happy as a lover; and attired
With sudden brightness, like a man inspired;
And, through the heat of conflict, keeps the law
In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw;
Or if an unexpected call succeed,
Come when it will, is equal to the need:
—He who, though thus endued as with a sense
And faculty for storm and turbulence,
Is yet a soul whose master-bias leans
To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes;
Sweet images! which, wheresoe'er he be,
Are at his heart; and such fidelity
It is his darling passion to approve;
More brave for this, that he hath much to love.
'Tis, finally, the man, who, lifted high,
Conspicuous object in a nation's eye,
Or left unthought-of in obscurity—
Who, with a toward or untoward lot,
Prosperous or adverse, to his wish or not—
Plays, in the many games of life, that one
Where what he most doth value must be won:
Whom neither shape of danger can dismay,

Nor thought of tender happiness betray;
Who, not content that former worth stand fast,
Looks forward, persevering to the last,
From well to better, daily self-surpassed;
Who, whether praise of him must walk the earth
Forever, and to noble deeds give birth,
Or he must fall, to sleep without his fame,
And leave a dead, unprofitable name—
Finds comfort in himself and in his cause;
And, while the mortal mist is gathering, draws
His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause—
This is the happy warrior; this is he
That every man in arms should wish to be.

December, 1805, or *January, 1806* 1807

LINES*

Composed at Grasmere, during a walk one evening, after a stormy day, the author having just read in a newspaper that the dissolution of Mr. Fox was hourly expected.

Loud is the vale! the voice is up
With which she speaks when storms are gone,
A mighty unison of streams!
Of all her voices, one!

Loud is the vale;—this inland depth
In peace is roaring like the sea;
Yon star upon the mountain-top
Is listening quietly.

*Charles James Fox, an English statesman who, almost alone among prominent Englishmen, had retained the sympathetic attitude, once held by Wordsworth, toward the French Revolution, died September 13, 1806. The loud roar of the falling streams in the narrow Grasmere Valley is one of the noticeable phenomena after a storm.

GRASMERE VALE AND LAKE, WESTMORELAND

(Dove Cottage, hidden by the trees, is in the right middle distance.)

Sad was I, even to pain depressed,
Importunate and heavy load!
The Comforter hath found me here,
Upon this lonely road;

And many thousands now are sad—
Wait the fulfillment of their fear;
For he must die who is their stay,
Their glory disappear.

A Power is passing from the earth
To breathless Nature's dark abyss;
But when the great and good depart
What is it more than this—

That man, who is from God sent forth,
Doth yet again to God return?—
Such ebb and flow must ever be,
Then wherefore should we mourn?

September (?), 1806 1807

10. "*Importuna e grave salma* [disturbing and heavy burden]—Michael Angelo."—Wordsworth's note.

ODE*

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

> The child is father of the man;
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety.

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Appareled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore—
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose;
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,

*See Appendix, page 403.

To me alone there came a thought of grief;
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong.
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday—
Thou child of joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
shepherd-boy!

Ye blessed creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fullness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
O evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May morning,
And the children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
—But there's a tree, of many, one,
A single field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone.
The pansy at my feet

Doth the same tale repeat—
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

Behold the child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' darling of a pigmy size!

See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learnéd art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song.
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
With all the persons, down to palsied age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy soul's immensity;
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted forever by the eternal mind—
Mighty prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,

103. *humorous stage.* From Fulke Greville's sonnet introducing Samuel Daniel's "Musophilus," 1603:

"I do not here upon this humorous stage,
Bring my transformed verse, appareled
With others' passions, or with others' rage."

Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy immortality
Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,
A presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That Nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction; not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blessed—
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast—
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise,
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised—
But for those first affections,

Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence; truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts today
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;

In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

And O ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober coloring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

1803 (? 1802)-1806 1807

"O NIGHTINGALE! THOU SURELY ART"

O nightingale! thou surely art
A creature of a "fiery heart"—
These notes of thine—they pierce and pierce;
Tumultuous harmony and fierce!
Thou sing'st as if the god of wine

2. *fiery heart.* "See Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, Part III, I, iv, 87." —Professor Knight's note.

Had helped thee to a valentine;
A song in mockery and despite
Of shades, and dews, and silent night;
And steady bliss, and all the loves
Now sleeping in these peaceful groves.

I heard a stock-dove sing or say
His homely tale, this very day;
His voice was buried among trees,
Yet to be come-at by the breeze.
He did not cease; but cooed—and cooed;
And somewhat pensively he wooed.
He sang of love, with quiet blending,
Slow to begin, and never ending;
Of serious faith, and inward glee;
That was the song—the song for me!

1806 1807

SONG AT THE FEAST OF BROUGHAM CASTLE*

UPON THE RESTORATION OF LORD CLIFFORD, THE SHEPHERD, TO THE ESTATES AND HONORS OF HIS ANCESTORS

High in the breathless hall the minstrel sate,
And Emont's murmur mingled with the song.—
The words of ancient time I thus translate,
A festal strain that hath been silent long:

"From town to town, from tower to tower,
The red rose is a gladsome flower.

6. *valentine*, sweetheart; as if pledged upon St. Valentine's Day.
*See Appendix, page 405.
6. *red rose*. The red rose signified the House of Lancaster; the white, the House of York.

Her thirty years of winter past,
The red rose is revived at last;
She lifts her head for endless spring,
For everlasting blossoming;
Both roses flourish, red and white:
In love and sisterly delight
The two that were at strife are blended,
And all old troubles now are ended.—
Joy! joy to both! but most to her
Who is the flower of Lancaster!
Behold her how she smiles today
On this great throng, this bright array!
Fair greeting doth she send to all
From every corner of the hall;
But chiefly from above the board
Where sits in state our rightful lord,
A Clifford to his own restored!

"They came with banner, spear, and shield;
And it was proved in Bosworth Field.
Not long the avenger was withstood—
Earth helped him with the cry of blood:
Saint George was for us, and the might
Of blessed angels crowned the right.
Loud voice the land has uttered forth,
We loudest in the faithful North.
Our fields rejoice, our mountains ring,
Our streams proclaim a welcoming;

15. *her,* Lord Clifford's mother.
25. *Bosworth Field.* Here, on August 22, 1485, Henry VII, "the avenger," overcame Richard III.
27. This line, Wordsworth said, was taken from "The Battle of Bosworth Field" by Sir John Beaumont (died 1644), nephew of the dramatist. It refers to the murder of the princes in the Tower by order of Richard III.
28. *Saint George.* Saint George is the patron saint of England.

Our strong-abodes and castles see
The glory of their loyalty.

"How glad is Skipton at this hour—
Though lonely, a deserted tower;
Knight, squire, and yeoman, page and groom:
We have them at the feast of Brough'm.
How glad Pendragon—though the sleep
Of years be on her!—She shall reap
A taste of this great pleasure, viewing
As in a dream her own renewing.
Rejoiced is Brough, right glad, I deem,
Beside her little humble stream;
And she that keepeth watch and ward
Her statelier Eden's course to guard;
They both are happy at this hour,
Though each is but a lonely tower—
But here is perfect joy and pride
For one fair house by Emont's side,
This day, distinguished without peer,
To see her master and to cheer—
Him, and his lady-mother dear!

"Oh! it was a time forlorn
When the fatherless was born—
Give her wings that she may fly,
Or she sees her infant die!
Swords that are with slaughter wild

36. *Skipton,* Skipton Castle in Yorkshire, the chief home of the Cliffords.
40. *Pendragon.* Pendragon Castle, said to have been built by Uther Pendragon, was also a seat of the Cliffords.
44. *Brough* (pronounced "bruff"), another castle of the Cliffords, in eastern Westmoreland.
46. *And she,* etc., perhaps Appleby Castle, on the River Eden, in eastern Westmoreland, still another castle of the Cliffords.
51. *one fair house,* Brougham Castle.

Hunt the mother and the child.
Who will take them from the light?
—Yonder is a man in sight—
Yonder is a house—but where?
No, they must not enter there.
To the caves, and to the brooks,
To the clouds of heaven she looks;
She is speechless, but her eyes
Pray in ghostly agonies.
Blissful Mary, mother mild,
Maid and mother undefiled,
Save a mother and her child!

"Now who is he that bounds with joy
On Carrock's side—a shepherd boy?
No thoughts hath he but thoughts that pass
Light as the wind along the grass.
Can this be he who hither came
In secret like a smothered flame?
O'er whom such thankful tears were shed
For shelter, and a poor man's bread!
God loves the child; and God hath willed
That those dear words should be fulfilled—
The lady's words, when forced away,
The last she to her babe did say:
'My own, my own, thy fellow-guest
I may not be; but rest thee, rest,
For lowly shepherd's life is best!'

"Alas! when evil men are strong
No life is good, no pleasure long.
The boy must part from Mosedale's groves,

73. *Carrock's side.* Carrock Fell is in Cumberland.
89. *Mosedale's groves.* Mosedale and the mountain Blencathara are at the edge of the Lake District, west of Penrith.

And leave Blencathara's rugged coves,
And quit the flowers that summer brings
To Glenderamakin's lofty springs;
Must vanish, and his careless cheer
Be turned to heaviness and fear.
—Give Sir Lancelot Threlkeld praise!
Hear it, good man, old in days!
Thou tree of covert and of rest
For this young bird that is distressed;
Among thy branches safe he lay,
And he was free to sport and play,
When falcons were abroad for prey.

"A recreant harp, that sings of fear
And heaviness in Clifford's ear!
I said when evil men are strong,
No life is good, no pleasure long—
A weak and cowardly untruth!
Our Clifford was a happy youth,
And thankful through a weary time,
That brought him up to manhood's prime.
—Again he wanders forth at will,
And tends a flock from hill to hill.
His garb is humble; ne'er was seen
Such garb with such a noble mien;
Among the shepherd grooms no mate
Hath he, a child of strength and state!
Yet lacks not friends for simple glee,
Nor yet for higher sympathy.
To his side the fallow deer
Came and rested without fear;
The eagle, lord of land and sea,
Stooped down to pay him fealty;

92. *Glenderamakin,* a river rising north of Blencathara.

And both the undying fish that swim
Through Bowscale Tarn did wait on him;
The pair were servants of his eye
In their immortality;
And glancing, gleaming, dark or bright,
Moved to and fro for his delight.
He knew the rocks which angels haunt
Upon the mountains visitant;
He hath kenned them taking wing.
And into caves where fairies sing
He hath entered; and been told
By voices how men lived of old.
Among the heavens his eye can see
The face of thing that is to be;
And, if that men report him right,
His tongue could whisper words of might.
—Now another day is come,
Fitter hope, and nobler doom;
He hath thrown aside his crook,
And hath buried deep his book;
Armor rusting in his halls
On the blood of Clifford calls—
'Quell the Scot,' exclaims the Lance;
Bear me to the heart of France,
Is the longing of the Shield—
Tell thy name, thou trembling Field;
Field of death, where'er thou be,
Groan thou with our victory!
Happy day, and mighty hour,
When our shepherd in his power,
Mailed and horsed, with lance and sword,
To his ancestors restored

123. *Bowscale Tarn,* in the region of the Cliffords' haunts. It was said to have contained two immortal fish.
134-137. The shepherd is said to have studied astrology and alchemy with the monks at Bolton.

Like a reappearing star,
Like a glory from afar,
First shall head the flock of war!"

Alas! the impassioned minstrel did not know
How, by Heaven's grace, this Clifford's heart was framed;
How he, long forced in humble walks to go,
Was softened into feeling, soothed, and tamed.

Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

In him the savage virtue of the race,
Revenge, and all ferocious thoughts were dead;
Nor did he change, but kept in lofty place
The wisdom which adversity had bred.

Glad were the vales and every cottage hearth;
The shepherd lord was honored more and more;
And, ages after he was laid in earth,
"The good Lord Clifford" was the name he bore.

1807 1807

PERSONAL TALK

I am not one who much or oft delight
To season my fireside with personal talk,
Of friends, who live within an easy walk,
Or neighbors, daily, weekly, in my sight;
And, for my chance acquaintance, ladies bright,

Sons, mothers, maidens withering on the stalk,
These all wear out of me, like forms with chalk
Painted on rich men's floors, for one feast night.
Better than such discourse doth silence long,
Long, barren silence, square with my desire;
To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,
In the loved presence of my cottage fire,
And listen to the flapping of the flame,
Or kettle whispering its faint undersong.

"Yet life," you say, "is life; we have seen and see,
And with a living pleasure we describe;
And fits of sprightly malice do but bribe
The languid mind into activity.
Sound sense, and love itself, and mirth and glee
Are fostered by the comment and the gibe."
Even be it so; yet still among your tribe,
Our daily world's true worldlings, rank not me!
Children are blest, and powerful; their world lies
More justly balanced; partly at their feet,
And part far from them—sweetest melodies
Are those that are by distance made more sweet;
Whose mind is but the mind of his own eyes,
He is a slave—the meanest we can meet!

Wings have we, and as far as we can go
We may find pleasure—wilderness and wood,
Blank ocean and mere sky, support that mood
Which with the lofty sanctifies the low.
Dreams, books, are each a world; and books, we know,
Are a substantial world, both pure and good.
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.

7. *forms,* marks to guide the dancers.

There find I personal themes, a plenteous store,
Matter wherein right voluble I am,
To which I listen with a ready ear;
Two shall be named, preëminently dear—
The gentle lady married to the Moor,
And heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb.

Nor can I not believe but that hereby
Great gains are mine; for thus I live remote
From evil-speaking; rancor, never sought,
Comes to me not; malignant truth, or lie.
Hence have I genial seasons, hence have I
Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous thought.
And thus from day to day my little boat
Rocks in its harbor, lodging peaceably.
Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves and nobler cares—
The poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays!
Oh! might my name be numbered among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days.

? 1807

LAODAMIA*

"With sacrifice before the rising morn
Vows have I made by fruitless hope inspired;
And from the infernal gods, 'mid shades forlorn
Of night, my slaughtered lord have I required.
Celestial pity I again implore—
Restore him to my sight—great Jove, restore!"

41. *The gentle lady*, etc., Desdemona in Shakespeare's *Othello.*
42. *Una*, in Spenser's *Faerie Queene.*
*See Appendix, page 405.

So speaking, and by fervent love endowed
With faith, the suppliant heavenward lifts her hands;
While, like the sun emerging from a cloud,
Her countenance brightens and her eye expands;
Her bosom heaves and spreads, her stature grows;
And she expects the issue in repose.

O terror! what hath she perceived?—O joy!
What doth she look on?—whom doth she behold?
Her hero slain upon the beach of Troy?
His vital presence? his corporeal mold?
It is—if sense deceive her not—'tis he!
And a god leads him, wingéd Mercury!

Mild Hermes spake—and touched her with his wand
That calms all fear: "Such grace hath crowned thy prayer,
Laodamía! that at Jove's command
Thy husband walks the paths of upper air.
He comes to tarry with thee three hours' space;
Accept the gift, behold him face to face!"

Forth sprang the impassioned queen her lord to clasp;
Again that consummation she essayed;
But unsubstantial Form eludes her grasp
As often as that eager grasp was made.
The phantom parts—but parts to reunite,
And reassume his place before her sight.

"Protesiláus, lo! thy guide is gone!
Confirm, I pray, the vision with thy voice.

12. *expects,* awaits.
18. *Mercury,* identical with Hermes, messenger of the gods.

This is our palace—yonder is thy throne;
Speak, and the floor thou tread'st on will rejoice.
Not to appal me have the gods bestowed
This precious boon, and blessed a sad abode."

"Great Jove, Laodamía! doth not leave
His gifts imperfect.—Specter though I be,
I am not sent to scare thee or deceive,
But in reward of thy fidelity.
And something also did my worth obtain;
For fearless virtue bringeth boundless gain.

"Thou knowest, the Delphic oracle foretold
That the first Greek who touched the Trojan strand
Should die; but me the threat could not withhold.
A generous cause a victim did demand;
And forth I leaped upon the sandy plain,
A self-devoted chief—by Hector slain."

"Supreme of heroes—bravest, noblest, best!
Thy matchless courage I bewail no more,
Which then, when tens of thousands were depressed
By doubt, propelled thee to the fatal shore;
Thou found'st—and I forgive thee—here thou art—
A nobler counselor than my poor heart.

"But thou, though capable of sternest deed,
Wert kind as resolute, and good as brave;
And he whose power restores thee hath decreed
Thou shouldst elude the malice of the grave.
Redundant are thy locks, thy lips as fair
As when their breath enriched Thessalian air.

"No specter greets me—no vain shadow this;
Come, blooming hero, place thee by my side!
Give, on this well-known couch, one nuptial kiss
To me, this day, a second time thy bride!"
Jove frowned in heaven; the conscious Parcae threw
Upon those roseate lips a Stygian hue.

"This visage tells thee that my doom is passed;
Nor should the change be mourned, even if the joys
Of sense were able to return as fast
And surely as they vanish. Earth destroys
Those raptures duly—Erebus disdains;
Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains.

"Be taught, O faithful consort, to control
Rebellious passion; for the gods approve
The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul;
A fervent, not ungovernable, love.
Thy transports moderate; and meekly mourn
When I depart, for brief is my sojourn—"

"Ah, wherefore?—Did not Hercules by force
Wrest from the guardian monster of the tomb
Alcestis, a reanimated corse,
Given back to dwell on earth in vernal bloom?
Medea's spells dispersed the weight of years,
And Aeson stood a youth 'mid youthful peers.

65. *Parcae*, the Fates.
66. *Stygian*, of the River Styx in the underworld; hence, death-like.
71. *Erebus*, the region of darkness through which the dead pass to Hades. It was from Erebus that Alcestis, wife of King Admetus, who had consented to die in place of her husband, was brought back from the underworld by Hercules. The incident is the subject of a play by Euripides.
83. *Medea*, a sorceress of Greek legend, who restored her husband Jason's aged father, Aeson, to the prime of manhood. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vii.

"The gods to us are merciful—and they
Yet further may relent; for mightier far
Than strength of nerve and sinew, or the sway
Of magic potent over sun and star,
Is love, though oft to agony distressed,
And though his favorite seat be feeble woman's breast.

"But if thou goest, I follow—" "Peace!" he said.
She looked upon him and was calmed and cheered;
The ghastly color from his lips had fled;
In his deportment, shape, and mien appeared
Elysian beauty, melancholy grace,
Brought from a pensive though a happy place.

He spake of love, such love as spirits feel
In worlds whose course is equable and pure;
No fears to beat away—no strife to heal—
The past unsighed for, and the future sure;
Spake of heroic arts in graver mood
Revived, with finer harmony pursued;

Of all that is most beauteous—imaged there
In happier beauty; more pellucid streams,
An ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams;
Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day
Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey.

Yet there the soul shall enter which hath earned
That privilege by virtue.—"Ill," said he,
"The end of man's existence I discerned,
Who from ignoble games and revelry
Could draw, when we had parted, vain delight,
While tears were thy best pastime, day and night;

95. *Elysian*, heavenly—pertaining to Elysium, the abode of the blessed spirits.

"And while my youthful peers before my eyes
(Each hero following his peculiar bent)
Prepared themselves for glorious enterprise
By martial sports, or, seated in the tent,
Chieftains and kings in council were detained;
What time the fleet at Aulis lay enchained.

"The wished-for wind was given. I then revolved
The oracle, upon the silent sea;
And, if no worthier led the way, resolved
That, of a thousand vessels, mine should be
The foremost prow in pressing to the strand—
Mine the first blood that tinged the Trojan sand.

"Yet bitter, ofttimes bitter, was the pang
When of thy loss I thought, beloved wife!
On thee too fondly did my memory hang,
And on the joys we shared in mortal life—
The paths which we had trod—these fountains, flowers;
My new-planned cities and unfinished towers.

"But should suspense permit the foe to cry,
'Behold, they tremble!—haughty their array,
Yet of their number no one dares to die?'
In soul I swept the indignity away.
Old frailties then recurred—but lofty thought,
In act embodied, my deliverance wrought.

"And thou, though strong in love, art all too weak
In reason, in self-government too slow;

120. *Aulis.* The Greek fleet, assembled at Aulis for the conquest of Troy, was held suffering pestilence and without wind, because Agamemnon, while hunting, had killed a stag of Diana. Agamemnon sent for his daughter Iphigenia to be sacrificed to the goddess. But Iphigenia was carried away by Diana, and the spell was lifted by the sacrifice of a stag. See Tennyson's "A Dream of Fair Women."

I counsel thee by fortitude to seek
Our blest reunion in the shades below.
The invisible world with thee hath sympathized;
Be thy affections raised and solemnized.

"Learn, by a mortal yearning, to ascend—
Seeking a higher object. Love was given,
Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end;
For this the passion to excess was driven;
That self might be annulled—her bondage prove
The fetters of a dream opposed to love."—

Aloud she shrieked! for Hermes reappears!
Round the dear shade she would have clung—'tis vain.
The hours are passed—too brief had they been years;
And him no mortal effort can detain.
Swift, toward the realms that know not earthly day,
He through the portal takes his silent way,
And on the palace floor a lifeless corse she lay.

Thus, all in vain exhorted and reproved,
She perished; and, as for a willful crime,
By the just gods whom no weak pity moved,
Was doomed to wear out her appointed time,
Apart from happy ghosts, that gather flowers
Of blissful quiet 'mid unfading bowers.

—Yet tears to human suffering are due;
And mortal hopes defeated and o'erthrown
Are mourned by man, and not by man alone,
As fondly he believes.—Upon the side
Of Hellespont (such faith was entertained)

168. *Hellespont,* the "Sea of Helle"; the Dardanelles.

A knot of spiry trees for ages grew
From out the tomb of him for whom she died;
And ever, when such stature they had gained
That Ilium's walls were subject to their view,
The trees' tall summits withered at the sight—
A constant interchange of growth and blight!

1814 1815

YARROW VISITED*

SEPTEMBER, 1814

And is this—Yarrow?—*This* the stream
Of which my fancy cherished,
So faithfully, a waking dream?
An image that hath perished!
O that some minstrel's harp were near,
To utter notes of gladness,
And chase this silence from the air,
That fills my heart with sadness!

Yet why?—a silvery current flows
With uncontrolled meanderings;
Nor have these eyes by greener hills
Been soothed, in all my wanderings.
And, through her depths, Saint Mary's Lake
Is visibly delighted;
For not a feature of those hills
Is in the mirror slighted.

173. *The trees' tall summits.* Pliny, in his *Natural History*, XIV, 44, speaks of these trees. Compare Vergil, *The Aeneid*, III, 22.

*Compare the poem with "Yarrow Unvisited," page 166.

13. *Saint Mary's Lake.* The Yarrow River traverses the length of Loch Saint Mary within the vale.

A blue sky bends o'er Yarrow Vale,
Save where that pearly whiteness
Is round the rising sun diffused,
A tender hazy brightness;
Mild dawn of promise! that excludes
All profitless dejection;
Though not unwilling here to admit
A pensive recollection.

Where was it that the famous Flower
Of Yarrow Vale lay bleeding?
His bed perchance was yon smooth mound
On which the herd is feeding;
And haply from this crystal pool,
Now peaceful as the morning,
The water-wraith ascended thrice—
And gave his doleful warning.

Delicious is the lay that sings
The haunts of happy lovers,
The path that leads them to the grove,
The leafy grove that covers;
And Pity sanctifies the verse
That paints, by strength of sorrow,
The unconquerable strength of love;
Bear witness, rueful Yarrow!

25-26. "Principal Shairp in his *Aspects of Poetry* ('The Three Yarrows') says that here Wordsworth fell into an inaccuracy; for Mary Scott of Dryhope, the real 'Flower of Yarrow,' never did lie bleeding on Yarrow, but became the wife of Wat of Harden and the mother of a wide-branching race. Yet Wordsworth speaks of *his* bed, evidently confounding the lady 'Flower of Yarrow' with that 'slaughtered youth' for whom so many ballads have sung lament. But doubtless Wordsworth had Logan's 'Braes of Yarrow' in his mind, where the lady laments her lover and names him 'the flower of Yarrow.'"—Professor Edward Dowden, *Poems of Wordsworth*, Athenaeum Press Series.

31. *The water-wraith*, etc. Compare Logan's lines from "Braes of Yarrow":

> "Thrice did the water-wraith ascend,
> And gave a doleful groan through Yarrow."

But thou, that didst appear so fair
To fond imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation.
Meek loveliness is round thee spread,
A softness still and holy;
The grace of forest charms decayed,
And pastoral melancholy.

That region left, the vale unfolds
Rich groves of lofty stature,
With Yarrow winding through the pomp
Of cultivated nature;
And, rising from those lofty groves,
Behold a ruin hoary!
The shattered front of Newark's towers,
Renowned in border story.

Fair scenes for childhood's opening bloom,
For sportive youth to stray in,
For manhood to enjoy his strength,
And age to wear away in!
Yon cottage seems a bower of bliss,
A covert for protection
Of tender thoughts, that nestle there—
The brood of chaste affection.

How sweet, on this autumnal day,
The wildwood fruits to gather,
And on my true-love's forehead plant
A crest of blooming heather!
And what if I enwreathed my own!
'Twere no offense to reason;

55. *Newark's towers.* Newark Castle is on the lower course of the river near Selkirk.

The sober hills thus deck their brows
To meet the wintry season.

I see—but not by sight alone,
Loved Yarrow, have I won thee;
A ray of fancy still survives—
Her sunshine plays upon thee!
Thy ever-youthful waters keep
A course of lively pleasure;
And gladsome notes my lips can breathe,
Accordant to the measure.

The vapors linger round the heights,
They melt, and soon must vanish;
One hour is theirs, nor more is mine—
Sad thought, which I would banish,
But that I know, where'er I go,
Thy genuine image, Yarrow!
Will dwell with me—to heighten joy,
And cheer my mind in sorrow.

1814 1815

THE RIVER DUDDON*

A Series of Sonnets

I

"NOT ENVYING LATIAN SHADES"

Not envying Latian shades—if yet they throw
A grateful coolness round that crystal spring,
Bandusia, prattling as when long ago
The Sabine Bard was moved her praise to sing;
Careless of flowers that in perennial blow
Round the moist marge of Persian fountains cling;
Heedless of Alpine torrents thundering
Through ice-built arches radiant as heaven's bow;
I seek the birthplace of a native stream.—
All hail, ye mountains! hail, thou morning light!
Better to breathe at large on this clear height
Than toil in needless sleep from dream to dream.
Pure flow the verse, pure, vigorous, free, and bright,
For Duddon, long-loved Duddon, is my theme!

II

"CHILD OF THE CLOUDS"

Child of the clouds! remote from every taint
Of sordid industry thy lot is cast;

*The River Duddon rises high in the western part of the Lake District near the junction of Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire, and flows into the Irish Sea. Its headwaters were among the favorite haunts of Wordsworth's boyhood.

1. *Latian,* pertaining to Latium, the central plain of Italy, especially the region about Rome.

3. *Bandusia.* This spring was near Sabium, the country seat of the Latin poet Horace, known as the Sabine Bard. (See his *Odes,* III, 13.)

Thine are the honors of the lofty waste;
Not seldom, when with heat the valleys faint,
Thy handmaid frost with spangled tissue quaint
Thy cradle decks; to chant thy birth, thou hast
No meaner poet than the whistling blast,
And desolation is thy patron saint!
She guards thee, ruthless power! who would not spare
Those mighty forests, once the bison's screen,
Where stalked the huge deer to his shaggy lair
Through paths and alleys roofed with darkest green;
Thousands of years before the silent air
Was pierced by whizzing shaft of hunter keen!

III

"HOW SHALL I PAINT THEE?"

How shall I paint thee?—Be this naked stone
My seat while I give way to such intent;
Pleased could my verse, a speaking monument,
Make to the eyes of men thy features known.
But as of all those tripping lambs not one
Outruns his fellows, so hath Nature lent
To thy beginning naught that doth present
Peculiar ground for hope to build upon.
To dignify the spot that gives thee birth
No sign of hoar antiquity's esteem
Appears, and none of modern fortune's care;
Yet thou thyself hast round thee shed a gleam
Of brilliant moss, instinct with freshness rare;
Prompt offering to thy foster-mother, Earth!

II. 11. *huge deer.* "The deer alluded to is the Leigh, a gigantic species long since extinct."—Wordsworth's note.

IV

"TAKE, CRADLED NURSLING"

Take, cradled nursling of the mountain, take
This parting glance, no negligent adieu!
A Protean change seems wrought while I pursue
The curves a loosely-scattered chain doth make;
Or rather thou appear'st a glistering snake,
Silent, and to the gazer's eye untrue,
Thridding with sinuous lapse the rushes, through
Dwarf willows gliding, and by ferny brake.
Starts from a dizzy steep the undaunted rill
Robed instantly in garb of snow-white foam;
And laughing dares the adventurer, who hath clomb
So high, a rival purpose to fulfill;
Else let the dastard backward wend, and roam,
Seeking less bold achievement, where he will!

V

"SOLE LISTENER, DUDDON"

Sole listener, Duddon! to the breeze that played
With thy clear voice, I caught the fitful sound
Wafted o'er sullen moss and craggy mound—
Unfruitful solitudes, that seemed to upbraid
The sun in heaven!—but now, to form a shade
For thee, green alders have together wound
Their foliage; ashes flung their arms around;
And birch trees risen in silver colonnade.
And thou hast also tempted here to rise,

IV. 3. *Protean change.* Proteus, a sea divinity, had the power of changing his form.

'Mid sheltering pines, this cottage rude and gray;
Whose ruddy children, by the mother's eyes
Carelessly watched, sport through the summer day,
Thy pleased associates.—Light as endless May
On infant bosoms lonely Nature lies.

VIII

"WHAT ASPECT BORE THE MAN"

What aspect bore the man who roved or fled,
First of his tribe, to this dark dell—who first
In this pellucid current slaked his thirst?
What hopes came with him? What designs were spread
Along his path? His unprotected bed
What dreams encompassed? Was the intruder nursed
In hideous usages, and rights accursed,
That thinned the living and disturbed the dead?
No voice replies—both air and earth are mute;
And thou, blue streamlet, murmuring, yield'st no more
Than a soft record, that, whatever fruit
Of ignorance thou might'st witness heretofore,
Thy function was to heal and to restore,
To soothe and cleanse, not madden and pollute!

XXVI

"RETURN, CONTENT!"

Return, Content! for fondly I pursued,
Even when a child, the streams—unheard, unseen;
Through tangled woods, impending rocks between;

Or, free as air, with flying inquest viewed
The sullen reservoirs whence their bold brood—
Pure as the morning, fretful, boisterous, keen,
Green as the salt-sea billows, white and green—
Poured down the hills, a choral multitude!
Nor have I tracked their course for scanty gains;
They taught me random cares and truant joys,
That shield from mischief and preserve from stains
Vague minds, while men are growing out of boys;
Maturer Fancy owes to their rough noise
Impetuous thoughts that brook not servile reins.

XXXIV

AFTERTHOUGHT

I thought of thee, my partner and my guide,
As being passed away.—Vain sympathies!
For, backward, Duddon! as I cast my eyes,
I see what was, and is, and will abide;
Still glides the stream, and shall forever glide;
The form remains, the function never dies;
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish—be it so!
Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live, and act, and serve the future hour;
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know.

1806-1820 1820

DION*

(SEE PLUTARCH)

I

Serene, and fitted to embrace,
Where'er he turned, a swan-like grace
Of haughtiness without pretense,
And to unfold a still magnificence,
Was princely Dion, in the power
And beauty of his happier hour.
And what pure homage *then* did wait
On Dion's virtues, while the lunar beam
Of Plato's genius, from its lofty sphere,
Fell round him in the grove of Academe,
Softening their inbred dignity austere—
That he, not too elate
With self-sufficing solitude,
But with majestic lowliness endued,
Might in the universal bosom reign,
And from affectionate observance gain
Help, under every change of adverse fate.

II

Five thousand warriors—O the rapturous day!
Each crowned with flowers, and armed with spear and shield,
Or ruder weapon which their course might yield,
To Syracuse advance in bright array.
Who leads them on?—The anxious people see

*See Appendix, page 406.

11. *dignity austere.* Plato besought Dion, whom he honored as a disciple and as a man, to discipline himself to greater benignity of spirit and manner; and Dion, while in Greece, made progress in this direction. He seems later, however, to have returned to his natural aloofness of disposition.

Long-exiled Dion marching at their head,
He also crowned with flowers of Sicily,
And in a white, far-beaming, corselet clad!
Pure transport undisturbed by doubt or fear
The gazers feel; and, rushing to the plain,
Salute those strangers as a holy train
Or blest procession (to the Immortals dear)
That brought their precious liberty again.
Lo! when the gates are entered, on each hand,
Down the long street, rich goblets filled with wine
In seemly order stand,
On tables set, as if for rites divine;
And, as the great deliverer marches by,
He looks on festal ground with fruits bestrown;
And flowers are on his person thrown
In boundless prodigality;
Nor doth the general voice abstain from prayer,
Invoking Dion's tutelary care,
As if a very deity he were!

III

Mourn, hills and groves of Attica! and mourn
Ilissus, bending o'er thy classic urn!
Mourn, and lament for him whose spirit dreads
Your once sweet memory, studious walks and shades!
For him who to divinity aspired,
Not on the breath of popular applause,
But through dependence on the sacred laws
Framed in the schools where Wisdom dwelt retired,
Intent to trace the ideal path of right
(More fair than heaven's broad causeway paved with stars)

43. *Ilissus*, a small river flowing through Athens.

Which Dion learned to measure with sublime delight;
But he hath overleaped the eternal bars;
And, following guides whose craft holds no consent
With aught that breathes the ethereal element,
Hath stained the robes of civil power with blood,
Unjustly shed, though for the public good.
Whence doubts that came too late, and wishes vain,
Hollow excuses, and triumphant pain;
And oft his cogitations sink as low
As, through the abysses of a joyless heart,
The heaviest plummet of despair can go—
But whence that sudden check? that fearful start!
He hears an uncouth sound—
Anon his lifted eyes
Saw, at a long-drawn gallery's dusky bound,
A Shape of more than mortal size
And hideous aspect, stalking round and round!
A woman's garb the Phantom wore,
And fiercely swept the marble floor—
Like Auster whirling to and fro,
His force on Caspian foam to try;
Or Boreas when he scours the snow
That skins the plains of Thessaly,
Or when aloft on Maenalus he stops
His flight, 'mid eddying pine-tree tops!

IV

So, but from toil less sign of profit reaping,
The sullen Specter to her purpose bowed,
Sweeping—vehemently sweeping—

64. *uncouth,* unknown.
71. *Auster,* the south wind.
73. *Boreas,* the north wind.
75. *Maenalus,* a mountain of Arcadia.

No pause admitted, no design avowed!
"Avaunt, inexplicable Guest!—avaunt,"
Exclaimed the chieftain—"let me rather see
The coronal that coiling vipers make;
The torch that flames with many a lurid flake,
And the long train of doleful pageantry
Which they behold, whom vengeful Furies haunt;
Who, while they struggle from the scourge to flee,
Move where the blasted soil is not unworn,
And, in their anguish, bear what other minds have
borne!"

v

But shapes, that come not at an earthly call,
Will not depart when mortal voices bid;
Lords of the visionary eye whose lid,
Once raised, remains aghast, and will not fall!
Ye gods, thought he, that servile Implement
Obeys a mystical intent!
Your minister would brush away
The spots that to my soul adhere;
But should she labor night and day,
They will not, cannot disappear;
Whence angry perturbations—and that look
Which no philosophy can brook!

vi

Ill-fated chief! there are whose hopes are built
Upon the ruins of thy glorious name;
Who, through the portal of one moment's guilt,
Pursue thee with their deadly aim!

83. *coiling vipers.* The heads of the Furies are represented in Greek art as being crowned with writhing snakes.

O matchless perfidy! portentous lust
Of monstrous crime!—that horror-striking blade,
Drawn in defiance of the gods, hath laid
The noble Syracusan low in dust!
Shuddered the walls—the marble city wept—
And silvan places heaved a pensive sigh;
But in calm peace the appointed victim slept,
As he had fallen in magnanimity;
Of spirit too capacious to require
That Destiny her course should change; too just
To his own native greatness to desire
That wretched boon, days lengthened by mistrust.
So were the hopeless troubles, that involved
The soul of Dion, instantly dissolved.
Released from life and cares of princely state,
He left this moral grafted on his fate:
"Him only pleasure leads, and peace attends,
Him, only him, the shield of Jove defends,
Whose means are fair and spotless as his ends."

1816 1820

COMPOSED UPON AN EVENING OF EXTRAORDINARY SPLENDOR AND BEAUTY*

I

Had this effulgence disappeared
With flying haste, I might have sent,
Among the speechless clouds, a look
Of blank astonishment;
But 'tis endued with power to stay,
And sanctify one closing day,
That frail mortality may see—
What is?—ah, no, but what *can* be!
Time was when field and watery cove
With modulated echoes rang,
While choirs of fervent angels sang
Their vespers in the grove
Or, crowning, star-like, each some sovereign height,
Warbled, for heaven above and earth below,
Strains suitable to both.—Such holy rite,
Methinks, if audibly repeated now
From hill or valley, could not move
Sublimer transport, purer love,
Than doth this silent spectacle—the gleam—
The shadow—and the peace supreme!

II

No sound is uttered—but a deep
And solemn harmony pervades
The hollow vale from steep to steep,
And penetrates the glades.

*The scene forming the basis of this poem was that from the little "mount" from which Wordsworth's home, "Rydal Mount," took its name. The feelings here represented, Wordsworth observed, belong to the class that inspired the sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" (see page 125).

Far-distant images draw nigh,
Called forth by wondrous potency
Of beamy radiance, that imbues
Whate'er it strikes with gem-like hues!
In vision exquisitely clear,
Herds range along the mountain side;
And glistening antlers are descried;
And gilded flocks appear.
Thine is the tranquil hour, purpureal Eve!
But long as god-like wish, or hope divine,
Informs my spirit, ne'er can I believe
That this magnificence is wholly thine!
—From worlds not quickened by the sun
A portion of the gift is won;
An intermingling of heaven's pomp is spread
On ground which British shepherds tread!

III

And if there be whom broken ties
Afflict, or injuries assail,
Yon hazy ridges to their eyes
Present a glorious scale,
Climbing suffused with sunny air,
To stop—no record hath told where!
And tempting Fancy to ascend,
And with immortal Spirits blend!
—Wings at my shoulders seem to play;
But, rooted here, I stand and gaze
On those bright steps that heavenward raise
Their practicable way.
Come forth, ye drooping old men, look abroad,
And see to what fair countries ye are bound!

44. *scale,* ladder, stairway (*L. scalae,* ladder).

And if some traveler, weary of his road,
Hath slept since noontide on the grassy ground,
Ye Genii! to his covert speed;
And wake him with such gentle heed
As may attune his soul to meet the dower
Bestowed on this transcendent hour!

IV

Such hues from their celestial urn
Were wont to stream before mine eye,
Where'er it wandered in the morn
Of blissful infancy.
This glimpse of glory, why renewed?
Nay, rather speak with gratitude;
For, if a vestige of those gleams
Survived, 'twas only in my dreams.
Dread Power! whom peace and calmness serve
No less than Nature's threatening voice,
If aught unworthy be my choice,
From Thee if I would swerve;
Oh, let thy grace remind me of the light
Full early lost, and fruitlessly deplored;
Which, at this moment, on my waking sight
Appears to shine, by miracle restored;
My soul, though yet confined to earth,
Rejoices in a second birth!
—'Tis past, the visionary splendor fades;
And night approaches with her shades.

1818 1820

61-80. The personal emotion of these lines should be compared with the feeling which Wordsworth experienced in childhood and youth, as seen, especially, in "Intimations of Immortality" and other poems touching upon his early life.

ECCLESIASTICAL SONNETS

XLIII

INSIDE OF KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL, CAMBRIDGE*

Tax not the royal saint with vain expense,
With ill-matched aims the architect who planned—
Albeit laboring for a scanty band
Of white-robed scholars only—this immense
And glorious work of fine intelligence!
Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more;
So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof
Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Lingering—and wandering on as loath to die;
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality.

XLIV

THE SAME

What awful pérspective! while from our sight
With gradual stealth the lateral windows hide
Their portraitures, their stonework glimmers, dyed
In the soft checkerings of a sleepy light.

*King's College Chapel at Cambridge is the most perfect architectural monument of the university, and the most excellent example of the late perpendicular Gothic to be found in England. The branching fan tracery of the ceiling is a typical example of its kind. The structure is also remarkable for its resonant acoustics. The very large stained glass windows of the sixteenth century occupy so great a proportion of the wall space that the building is unusual for its amount of light. The chapel was founded in 1440 by Henry VI, a man of great piety and devotion to learning, and was finished by his successors.

Martyr, or king, or sainted eremite,
Whoe'er ye be, that thus, yourselves unseen,
Imbue your prison bars with solemn sheen,
Shine on, until ye fade with coming night!—
But, from the arms of silence—list! O list!
The music bursteth into second life;
The notes luxuriate, every stone is kissed
By sound, or ghost of sound, in mazy strife;
Heart-thrilling strains, that cast, before the eye
Of the devout, a veil of ecstasy!

XLV

CONTINUED

They dreamt not of a perishable home
Who thus could build. Be mine, in hours of fear
Or groveling thought, to seek a refuge here;
Or through the aisles of Westminster to roam;
Where bubbles burst, and folly's dancing foam
Melts, if it cross the threshold; where the wreath
Of awestruck wisdom droops. Or let my path
Lead to that younger pile, whose skylight dome
Hath typified by reach of daring art
Infinity's embrace; whose guardian crest,
The silent cross, among the stars shall spread
As now, when she hath also seen her breast
Filled with mementos, satiate with its part
Of grateful England's overflowing dead.

1821 1822

5. *eremite,* hermit.

XLV. 4. *Westminster.* Westminster Abbey is especially the sepulcher of men famous for their intellectual gifts.

8. *pile,* St. Paul's Cathedral, of Renaissance architecture, where many of the national military and naval heroes of England are entombed.

TO A SKYLARK*

Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?
Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine;
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
True to the kindred points of heaven and home!

1825 1827

THE PRIMROSE OF THE ROCK

A rock there is whose homely front
The passing traveler slights;
Yet there the glowworms hang their lamps,
Like stars, at various heights;
And one coy primrose to that rock
The vernal breeze invites.

What hideous warfare hath been waged,
What kingdoms overthrown,
Since first I spied that primrose-tuft
And marked it for my own;
A lasting link in Nature's chain
From highest heaven let down!

*Compare this with Wordsworth's former poem upon the same subject (page 178) and also with Shelley's "Skylark." Note, once more, in line 8, Wordsworth's inevitableness of expression.

The flowers, still faithful to the stems,
Their fellowship renew;
The stems are faithful to the root,
That worketh out of view;
And to the rock the root adheres
In every fiber true.

Close clings to earth the living rock,
Though threatening still to fall;
The earth is constant to her sphere;
And God upholds them all;
So blooms this lonely plant, nor dreads
Her annual funeral.

. . . . . .

Here closed the meditative strain;
But air breathed soft that day,
The hoary mountain-heights were cheered,
The sunny vale looked gay;
And to the primrose of the rock
I gave this after-lay.

I sang—Let myriads of bright flowers,
Like thee, in field and grove
Revive unenvied;—mightier far,
Than tremblings that reprove
Our vernal tendencies to hope,
Is God's redeeming love;

That love which changed—for wan disease,
For sorrow that had bent
O'er hopeless dust, for withered age—
Their moral element,
And turned the thistles of a curse
To types beneficent.

Sin-blighted though we are, we, too,
The reasoning sons of men,
From one oblivious winter called
Shall rise, and breathe again;
And in eternal summer lose
Our threescore years and ten.

To humbleness of heart descends
This prescience from on high,
The faith that elevates the just,
Before and when they die;
And makes each soul a separate heaven,
A court for Deity.

1831 1835

YARROW REVISITED*

The gallant youth, who may have gained,
Or seeks, a "winsome marrow,"
Was but an infant in the lap
When first I looked on Yarrow;
Once more, by Newark's Castle-gate
Long left without a warder,
I stood, looked, listened, and with thee,
Great Minstrel of the Border!

*Wordsworth supplied these notes: "The following stanzas are a memorial of a day passed with Sir Walter Scott and other friends visiting the Banks of the Yarrow under his guidance, immediately before his departure from Abbotsford for Naples.

"The title 'Yarrow Revisited' will stand in no need of explanation for readers acquainted with the author's previous poems suggested by that celebrated stream."

With this poem should also be read the sonnet "On the Departure of Sir Walter Scott from Abbotsford for Naples," page 242.

Grave thoughts ruled wide on that sweet day,
Their dignity installing
In gentle bosoms, while sear leaves
Were on the bough, or falling;
But breezes played, and sunshine gleamed—
The forest to embolden;
Reddened the fiery hues, and shot
Transparence through the golden.

For busy thoughts the stream flowed on
In foamy agitation;
And slept in many a crystal pool
For quiet contemplation
No public and no private care
The freeborn mind enthralling,
We made a day of happy hours,
Our happy days recalling.

Brisk Youth appeared, the Morn of Youth,
With freaks of graceful folly—
Life's temperate Noon, her sober Eve,
Her Night not melancholy;
Past, present, future, all appeared
In harmony united,
Like guests that meet, and some from far,
By cordial love invited.

And if, as Yarrow, through the woods
And down the meadow ranging,
Did meet us with unaltered face,
Though we were changed and changing;
If, *then,* some natural shadows spread
Our inward prospect over,
The soul's deep valley was not slow
Its brightness to recover.

Eternal blessings on the Muse,
And her divine employment!
The blameless Muse, who trains her sons
For hope and calm enjoyment;
Albeit sickness, lingering yet,
Has o'er their pillow brooded;
And Care waylays their steps—a Sprite
Not easily eluded.

For thee, O Scott! compelled to change
Green Eildon Hill and Cheviot
For warm Vesuvio's vine-clad slopes;
And leave thy Tweed and Tiviot
For mild Sorrento's breezy waves;
May classic Fancy, linking
With native Fancy her fresh aid,
Preserve thy heart from sinking!

Oh! while they minister to thee,
Each vying with the other,
May Health return to mellow Age,
With Strength, her venturous brother;
And Tiber, and each brook and rill
Renowned in song and story,
With unimagined beauty shine,
Nor lose one ray of glory!

For thou, upon a hundred streams,
By tales of love and sorrow,
Of faithful love, undaunted truth,
Hast shed the power of Yarrow;
And streams unknown, hills yet unseen,
Wherever they invite thee,
At parent Nature's grateful call,
With gladness must requite thee.

A gracious welcome shall be thine,
Such looks of love and honor
As thy own Yarrow gave to me
When first I gazed upon her;
Beheld what I had feared to see,
Unwilling to surrender
Dreams treasured up from early days,
The holy and the tender.

And what, for this frail world, were all
That mortals do or suffer,
Did no responsive harp, no pen,
Memorial tribute offer?
Yea, what were mighty Nature's self?
Her features, could they win us,
Unhelped by the poetic voice
That hourly speaks within us?

Nor deem that localized Romance
Plays false with our affections;
Unsanctifies our tears—made sport
For fanciful dejections.
Ah, no! the visions of the past
Sustain the heart in feeling
Life as she is—our changeful life,
With friends and kindred dealing.

Bear witness, ye, whose thoughts that day
In Yarrow's groves were centered;
Who through the silent portal arch
Of moldering Newark entered;
And clomb the winding stair that once
Too timidly was mounted

97. *ye*, i. e., those who visited Newark that day.

By the "last Minstrel" (not the last!)
Ere he his tale recounted.

Flow on forever, Yarrow Stream!
Fulfill thy pensive duty,
Well pleased that future bards should chant
For simple hearts thy beauty;
To dream-light dear while yet unseen,
Dear to the common sunshine,
And dearer still, as now I feel,
To memory's shadowy moonshine!

1831 1835

"HAIL, TWILIGHT, SOVEREIGN OF ONE PEACEFUL HOUR"*

Hail, Twilight, sovereign of one peaceful hour!
Not dull art thou as undiscerning Night;
But studious only to remove from sight
Day's mutable distinctions.—Ancient Power!
Thus did the waters gleam, the mountains lower,
To the rude Briton, when, in wolf-skin vest
Here roving wild, he laid him down to rest
On the bare rock, or through a leafy bower
Looked ere his eyes were closed. By him was seen
The self-same Vision which we now behold,
At thy meek bidding, shadowy Power! brought forth;
These mighty barriers, and the gulf between;
The flood, the stars—a spectacle as old
As the beginning of the heavens and earth!

? 1815

*This sonnet and the six sonnets following it are from various groups of Wordsworth's own division of his poems.

NOVEMBER 1*

How clear, how keen, how marvelously bright
The effluence from yon distant mountain's head,
Which, strewn with snow smooth as the sky can shed,
Shines like another sun—on mortal sight
Uprisen, as if to check approaching Night,
And all her twinkling stars. Who now would tread,
If so he might, yon mountain's glittering head—
Terrestrial, but a surface, by the flight
Of sad mortality's earth-sullying wing,
Unswept, unstained? Nor shall the aërial Powers
Dissolve that beauty, destined to endure,
White, radiant, spotless, exquisitely pure,
Through all vicissitudes, till genial Spring
Has filled the laughing vales with welcome flowers.

December, 1815 1816

"SURPRISED BY JOY—IMPATIENT AS THE WIND"

Surprised by joy—impatient as the wind
I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom
But thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind—
But how could I forget thee? Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,

*Wordsworth said that this sonnet was suggested by the snow on Langdale Pikes (peaks), which lie west of Grasmere and Rydal. "Surprised by Joy." 3. *thee*, Catherine, Wordsworth's second daughter, who was born in 1808 and died in 1812. The idea of the sonnet was suggested "long after her death," Wordsworth said.

Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss!—That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
That neither present time nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

1812 1815

TO B. R. HAYDON*

High is our calling, friend!—Creative art
(Whether the instrument of words she use,
Or pencil pregnant with ethereal hues)
Demands the service of a mind and heart,
Though sensitive, yet, in their weakest part,
Heroically fashioned—to infuse
Faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse,
While the whole world seems adverse to desert.
And, oh! when Nature sinks, as oft she may,
Through long-lived pressure of obscure distress,
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,
And in the soul admit of no decay,
Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness—
Great is the glory, for the strife is hard!

1815 1816

*Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846), a friend of Wordsworth, was a religious and historical painter. At this time he was laboring under great difficulties for recognition in his profession, some of which he may have created himself. He had written Wordsworth, November 27, 1815: "I will bear want, pain, misery, and blindness, but I will never yield one step I have gained on the road I am determined to travel over."

ON THE DEPARTURE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT FROM ABBOTSFORD, FOR NAPLES*

A trouble, not of clouds or weeping rain,
Nor of the setting sun's pathetic light
Engendered, hangs o'er Eildon's triple height;
Spirits of power, assembled there, complain
For kindred power departing from their sight;
While Tweed, best pleased in chanting a blithe strain,
Saddens his voice again, and yet again.
Lift up your hearts, ye mourners! for the might
Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes;
Blessings and prayers, in nobler retinue
Than sceptered king or laureled conqueror knows,
Follow this wondrous potentate. Be true,
Ye winds of ocean, and the midland sea,
Wafting your charge to soft Parthenope!

1831 1833

"MOST SWEET IT IS WITH UNUPLIFTED EYES"

Most sweet it is with unuplifted eyes
To pace the ground, if path be there or none,
While a fair region round the traveler lies
Which he forbears again to look upon;
Pleased rather with some soft, ideal scene,

*Between Scott and Wordsworth there was warm personal friendship, despite some artistic uncongeniality. Scott was at this time leaving Abbotsford, the home he had built upon the Tweed, shattered in mind and worn out in body, defeated in his attempt to free his estate from debt by his literary work. He returned, only to die.

3. *Eildon's triple height.* The Eildon Hills rise close above Abbotsford.

14. *Parthenope,* the classic name of Naples. Here the corpse of Parthenope, one of the sirens, who drowned herself for love of Ulysses, was cast upon the shore.

The work of fancy, or some happy tone
Of meditation, slipping in between
The beauty coming and the beauty gone.
If thought and love desert us, from that day
Let us break off all commerce with the Muse;
With thought and love companions of our way,
Whate'er the senses take or may refuse,
The mind's internal heaven shall shed her dews
Of inspiration on the humblest lay.

1833 1835

"A POET!—HE HATH PUT HIS HEART TO SCHOOL"*

A poet!—He hath put his heart to school,
Nor dares to move unpropped upon the staff
Which art hath lodged within his hand—must laugh
By precept only, and shed tears by rule.
Thy art be Nature; the live current quaff,
And let the groveler sip his stagnant pool,
In fear that else, when critics grave and cool
Have killed him, Scorn should write his epitaph.
How does the meadow-flower its bloom unfold?
Because the lovely little flower is free
Down to its root, and, in that freedom, bold;
And so the grandeur of the forest tree
Comes not by casting in a formal mold,
But from its *own* divine vitality.

? 1842

*To this partly satirical sonnet Wordsworth prefixed the following note: "I was impelled to write this sonnet by the disgusting frequency with which the word *artistical*, imported with other impertinences from the Germans, is employed by writers of the present day. For *artistical* let them substitute *artificial*, and the poetry written on this system, both at home and abroad, will be for the most part much better characterized."

From THE RECLUSE*

BOOK I

On man, on nature, and on human life,
Musing in solitude, I oft perceive
Fair trains of imagery before me rise,
Accompanied by feelings of delight
Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;
And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes
Or elevates the mind, intent to weigh
The good and evil of our mortal state.
—To these emotions, whencesoe'er they come,
Whether from breath of outward circumstance,
Or from the soul—an impulse to herself—
I would give utterance in numerous verse.
Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love, and hope,
And melancholy fear subdued by faith;
Of blessed consolations in distress;
Of moral strength, and intellectual power;
Of joy in widest commonalty spread;
Of the individual mind that keeps her own
Inviolate retirement, subject there
To conscience only, and the law supreme
Of that Intelligence which governs all—
I sing: "Fit audience let me find though few!"

So prayed, more gaining than he asked, the bard—
In holiest mood. Urania, I shall need
Thy guidance, or a greater muse, if such
Descend to earth or dwell in highest heaven!

*See Appendix, page 408.
23. *Fit audience,* etc. See *Paradise Lost,* VII, 31.

For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink
Deep—and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds
To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.
All strength—all terror, single or in bands,
That ever was put forth in personal form—
Jehovah—with his thunder, and the choir
Of shouting angels, and the empyreal thrones—
I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not
The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out
By help of dreams—can breed such fear and awe
As fall upon us often when we look
Into our minds, into the mind of man—
My haunt, and the main region of my song.
—Beauty—a living Presence of the earth,
Surpassing the most fair ideal forms
Which craft of delicate Spirits hath composed
From earth's materials—waits upon my steps;
Pitches her tents before me as I move,
An hourly neighbor. Paradise, and groves
Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old
Sought in the Atlantic Main—why should they be
A history only of departed things,
Or a mere fiction of what never was?
For the discerning intellect of man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day.
—I, long before the blissful hour arrives,
Would chant, in lonely peace, the spousal verse
Of this great consummation; and, by words
Which speak of nothing more than what we are,
Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep
Of death, and win the vacant and the vain

To noble raptures; while my voice proclaims
How exquisitely the individual mind
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less
Of the whole species) to the external world
Is fitted—and how exquisitely, too—
Theme this but little heard of among men—
The external world is fitted to the mind;
And the creation (by no lower name
Can it be called) which they with blended might
Accomplish—this is our high argument.
—Such grateful haunts foregoing, if I oft
Must turn elsewhere—to travel near the tribes
And fellowships of men, and see ill sights
Of madding passions mutually inflamed;
Must hear Humanity in fields and groves
Pipe solitary anguish; or must hang
Brooding above the fierce confederate storm
Of sorrow, barricadoed evermore
Within the walls of cities—may these sounds
Have their authentic comment; that even these
Hearing, I be not downcast or forlorn!—
Descend, prophetic Spirit! that inspir'st
The human Soul of universal earth,
Dreaming on things to come; and dost possess
A metropolitan temple in the hearts
Of mighty poets; upon me bestow
A gift of genuine insight; that my song
With star-like virtue in its place may shine,
Shedding benignant influence, and secure,

83-85. In his own note on the lines Wordsworth quotes from Shakespeare's Sonnet CVII:

> "Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
> Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,
> Can yet the lease of my true love control."

86. *metropolitan temple,* the chief church of an ecclesiastical province, presided over by a bishop or other high dignitary.

Itself, from all malevolent effect
Of those mutations that extend their sway
Throughout the nether sphere!—And if with this
I mix more lowly matter; with the thing
Contemplated, describe the mind and man
Contemplating; and who, and what he was—
The transitory being that beheld
This vision; when and where, and how he lived;—
Be not this labor useless. If such theme
May sort with highest objects, then—dread Power!
Whose gracious favor is the primal source
Of all illumination—may my life
Express the image of a better time,
More wise desires, and simpler manners; nurse
My heart in genuine freedom; all pure thoughts
Be with me; so shall thy unfailing love
Guide, and support, and cheer me to the end!

1799-1801 (?) 1814

THE PRELUDE*

[BOOK I]

INTRODUCTION——CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLTIME

Oh, there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while it fans my cheek
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.
Whate'er its mission, the soft breeze can come
To none more grateful than to me; escaped
From the vast city, where I long had pined,
A discontented sojourner; now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.
What dwelling shall receive me? In what vale
Shall be my harbor? Underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home? And what clear stream
Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?
The earth is all before me. With a heart
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,
I look about; and should the chosen guide
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,
I cannot miss my way. I breathe again!
Trances of thought and mountings of the mind
Come fast upon me; it is shaken off,
That burthen of my own unnatural self,
The heavy weight of many a weary day
Not mine, and such as were not made for me.
Long months of peace—if such bold word accord
With any promises of human life—
Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
Are mine in prospect; whither shall I turn,

*See Appendix, page 408.

By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
Upon the river point me out my course?

Dear Liberty! Yet what would it avail
But for a gift that consecrates the joy?
For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt within
A correspondent breeze, that gently moved
With quickening virtue, but is now become
A tempest, a redundant energy,
Vexing its own creation. Thanks to both,
And their congenial powers, that, while they join
In breaking up a long-continued frost,
Bring with them vernal promises, the hope
Of active days urged on by flying hours—
Days of sweet leisure, taxed with patient thought
Abstruse, nor wanting punctual service high,
Matins and vespers of harmonious verse!

Thus far, O Friend! did I, not used to make
A present joy the matter of a song,
Pour forth that day my soul in measured strains
That would not be forgotten, and are here
Recorded. To the open fields I told
A prophecy; poetic numbers came
Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe
A renovated spirit singled out,
Such hope was mine, for holy services.
My own voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's

47. Wordsworth wrote little "occasional" verse. That which he did write was often composed years after the incident on which it was founded had taken place.
54. See lines 334-337, page 279.

Internal echo of the imperfect sound;
To both I listened, drawing from them both
A cheerful confidence in things to come.

Content and not unwilling now to give
A respite to this passion, I paced on
With brisk and eager steps; and came, at length,
To a green, shady place, where down I sat
Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice,
And settling into gentler happiness.
'Twas autumn, and a clear and placid day,
With warmth, as much as needed, from a sun
Two hours declined toward the west; a day
With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass,
And in the sheltered and the sheltering grove
A perfect stillness. Many were the thoughts
Encouraged and dismissed, till choice was made
Of a known vale, whither my feet should turn,
Nor rest till they had reached the very door
Of the one cottage which methought I saw.
No picture of mere memory ever looked
So fair; and while upon the fancied scene
I gazed with growing love, a higher power
Than fancy gave assurance of some work
Of glory there forthwith to be begun,
Perhaps, too, there performed. Thus long I mused,
Nor e'er lost sight of what I mused upon,
Save when, amid the stately grove of oaks,
Now here, now there, an acorn, from its cup
Dislodged, through sear leaves rustled, or at once
To the bare earth dropped with a startling sound.
From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun

72. *a known vale,* Grasmere, where he settled in the following December.

Had almost touched the horizon; casting then
A backward glance upon the curling cloud
Of city smoke, by distance ruralized,
Keen as a truant or a fugitive,
But as a pilgrim resolute, I took,
Even with the chance equipment of that hour,
The road that pointed toward the chosen vale.
It was a splendid evening, and my soul
Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked
Aeolian visitations; but the harp
Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,
And lastly utter silence! "Be it so;
Why think of anything but present good?"
So, like a home-bound laborer I pursued
My way beneath the mellowing sun, that shed
Mild influence; nor left in me one wish
Again to bend the Sabbath of that time
To a servile yoke. What need of many words?
A pleasant, loitering journey, through three days
Continued, brought me to my hermitage.
I spare to tell of what ensued, the life
In common things—the endless store of things,
Rare, or at least so seeming, every day
Found all about me in one neighborhood—
The self-congratulation, and, from morn
To night, unbroken cheerfulness serene.
But speedily an earnest longing rose
To brace myself to some determined aim,
Reading or thinking; either to lay up
New stores, or rescue from decay the old
By timely interference. And therewith

96. *Aeolian,* musical, poetic.
104. *Sabbath,* hallowed quietude.
105. *servile yoke,* the toil of composition.

Came hopes still higher, that with outward life
I might endue some airy fantasies
That had been floating loose about for years,
And to such beings temperately deal forth
The many feelings that oppressed my heart.
That hope hath been discouraged; welcome light
Dawns from the east, but dawns to disappear
And mock me with a sky that ripens not
Into a steady morning. If my mind,
Remembering the bold promise of the past,
Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,
Vain is her wish; where'er she turns she finds
Impediments from day to day renewed.

And now it would content me to yield up
Those lofty hopes awhile, for present gifts
Of humbler industry. But, oh, dear Friend!
The poet, gentle creature as he is,
Hath, like the lover, his unruly times;
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
Though no distress be near him but his own
Unmanageable thoughts; his mind, best pleased
While she as duteous as the mother dove
Sits brooding, lives not always to that end,
But like the innocent bird, hath goadings on
That drive her as in trouble through the groves;
With me is now such passion, to be blamed
No otherwise than as it lasts too long.

When, as becomes a man who would prepare
For such an arduous work, I through myself
Make rigorous inquisition, the report
Is often cheering; for I neither seem

To lack that first great gift, the vital soul,
Nor general truths, which are themselves a sort
Of elements and agents, under-powers,
Subordinate helpers of the living mind.
Nor am I naked of external things,
Forms, images, nor numerous other aids
Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil
And needful to build up a poet's praise.
Time, place, and manners do I seek, and these
Are found in plenteous store, but nowhere such
As may be singled out with steady choice;
No little band of yet remembered names
Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope
To summon back from lonesome banishment,
And make them dwellers in the hearts of men
Now living, or to live in future years.
Sometimes the ambitious power of choice, mistaking
Proud springtide swellings for a regular sea,
Will settle on some British theme, some old
Romantic tale by Milton left unsung;
More often turning to some gentle place
Within the grove of Chivalry, I pipe
To shepherd swains, or seated, harp in hand,
Amid reposing knights by a river side
Or fountain, listen to the grave reports
Of dire enchantments faced and overcome
By the strong mind, and tales of warlike feats,
Where spear encountered spear, and sword with sword
Fought, as if conscious of the blazonry

167. *springtide swellings,* the high tides of the lunar month.
169. *Romantic tale,* etc. Milton, before writing *Paradise Lost,* considered using the life of King Arthur as an epic subject.
170-186. In these lines Wordsworth names some of the chief topics of chivalry, well exemplified in Spenser's *Faerie Queene.* Wordsworth was a great admirer of the earlier poet.

That the shield bore, so glorious was the strife;
Whence inspiration for a song that winds
Through ever-changing scenes of votive quest
Wrongs to redress, harmonious tribute paid
To patient courage and unblemished truth,
To firm devotion, zeal unquenchable,
And Christian meekness hallowing faithful loves.
Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would relate
How vanquished Mithridates northward passed,
And, hidden in the cloud of years, became
Odin, the father of a race by whom
Perished the Roman Empire; how the friends
And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain
Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles,
And left their usages, their arts and laws,
To disappear by a slow, gradual death,
To dwindle and to perish one by one,
Starved in those narrow bounds—but not the soul
Of Liberty, which fifteen hundred years
Survived, and, when the European came
With skill and power that might not be withstood,
Did, like a pestilence, maintain its hold
And wasted down by glorious death that race
Of natural heroes. Or I would record
How, in tyrannic times, some high-souled man,
Unnamed among the chronicles of kings,

187. *Mithridates.* Mithridates (132-63 B. C.), King of Pontus, was one of the most successful opponents of Roman dominion in Asia.

189. *Odin,* chief of the Norse divinities.

191. *Sertorius,* Quintus, a Roman general opposing Sulla, who maintained himself in Spain for ten years until his assassination in 72 B. C. By his mild and just governance he attracted many exiles from Rome.

192. *the Fortunate Isles,* the Canary and Madeira Islands; so called in classical literature.

Suffered in silence for truth's sake; or tell
How that one Frenchman, through continued force
Of meditation on the inhuman deeds
Of those who conquered first the Indian Isles,
Went single in his ministry across
The ocean—not to comfort the oppressed,
But, like a thirsty wind, to roam about
Withering the oppressor; how Gustavus sought
Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines;
How Wallace fought for Scotland; left the name
Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower,
All over his dear country; left the deeds
Of Wallace, like a family of ghosts,
To people the steep rocks and river banks,
Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul
Of independence and stern liberty.
Sometimes it suits me better to invent
A tale from my own heart, more near akin
To my own passions and habitual thoughts;
Some variegated story, in the main
Lofty, but the unsubstantial structure melts
Before the very sun that brightens it,
Mist into air dissolving! Then a wish,
My last and favorite aspiration, mounts
With yearning toward some philosophic song
Of truth that cherishes our daily life;
With meditations passionate from deep

206. *one Frenchmen*, Dominique de Gourgues, a French adventurer, who made a successful punitive descent on Spanish garrisons in Florida in 1567.

212. *Gustavus*, Gustavus Erikson (1496-1560), a Swedish patriot. He retired for safety among the farmers and miners of Dalecarlia, who at length united under him, freed Sweden from Denmark, and made him king as Gustavus Adolphus I.

215. *Wallace*, William (1274-1305), a Scottish patriotic leader.

Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse
Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre;
But from this awful burthen I full soon
Take refuge and beguile myself with trust
That mellower years will bring a riper mind
And clearer insight. Thus my days are passed
In contradiction; with no skill to part
Vague longing, haply bred by want of power,
From paramount impulse not to be withstood,
A timorous capacity from prudence,
From circumspection, infinite delay.
Humility and modest awe themselves
Betray me, serving often for a cloak
To a more subtle selfishness; that now
Locks every function up in blank reserve,
Now dupes me, trusting to an anxious eye
That with intrusive restlessness beats off
Simplicity and self-presented truth.
Ah! better far than this, to stray about
Voluptuously through fields and rural walks,
And ask no record of the hours, resigned
To vacant musing, unreproved neglect
Of all things, and deliberate holiday.
Far better never to have heard the name
Of zeal and just ambition than to live
Baffled and plagued by a mind that every hour
Turns recreant to her task; takes heart again,
Then feels immediately some hollow thought
Hang like an interdict upon her hopes.
This is my lot; for either still I find
Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
Or see of absolute accomplishment

233. *Orphean*, pertaining to Orpheus, a legendary Greek musician, son of Apollo. Wordsworth here seems to imply that to be a lyric poet was his own ambition.

Much wanting, so much wanting, in myself,
That I recoil and droop, and seek repose
In listlessness from vain perplexity,
Unprofitably traveling toward the grave,
Like a false steward who hath much received
And renders nothing back.
Was it for this
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams? For this, didst thou,
O Derwent! winding among grassy holms
Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.

When he had left the mountains and received
On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers
That yet survive, a shattered monument
Of feudal sway, the bright blue river passed
Along the margin of our terrace walk—
A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved.
Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,
In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
Made one long bathing of a summer's day;
Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured
The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves

275. *Derwent,* the River Derwent.
284. *a shattered monument,* Cockermouth Castle.

Of yellow ragwort; or when rock and hill,
The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,
Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone
Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut
Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport,
A naked savage, in the thunder-shower.

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear;
Much favored in my birthplace, and no less
In that beloved vale to which ere long
We were transplanted—there were we let loose
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
Ten birthdays, when among the mountain-slopes
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy
With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung
To range the open heights where woodcocks run
Among the smooth, green turf. Through half the night,
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
That anxious visitation; moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell
In these night wanderings that a strong desire
O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toil
Became my prey; and when the deed was done

295. *Skiddaw.* See note on lines 39-40, page 152.
304. *beloved vale,* Esthwaite, where the Hawkshead school was situated.
310. *springes,* bird-snares.

I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less when spring had warmed the cultured vale,
Moved we as plunderers where the mother bird
Had in high places built her lodge; though mean
Our object and inglorious, yet the end
Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill sustained, and almost—so it seemed—
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud, dry wind
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds!

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark,
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society. How strange that all
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!
Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;
Whether her fearless visitings, or those
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light

Opening the peaceful clouds; or she may use
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

One summer evening—led by her—I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in,
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure; nor without the voice
Of mountain echoes did my boat move on,
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the gray sky.
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way

Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark—
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colors of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or starlight thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things—
With life and nature—purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognize
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapors rolling down the valley made
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,
At noon and 'mid the calm of summer nights,

When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons. Happy time
It was indeed for all of us—for me
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud
The village clock tolled six—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures—the resounding horn,
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.
Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star
That fled, and flying still before me, gleamed

Upon the glassy plain; and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
And Souls of lonely places! Can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry, when ye through many a year
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
Impressed upon all forms the characters
Of danger or desire; and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Work like a sea?
Not uselessly employed,
Might I pursue this theme through every change
Of exercise and play, to which the year
Did summon us in his delightful round.

We were a noisy crew; the sun in heaven
Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours;
Nor saw a band in happiness and joy

Richer, or worthier of the ground they trod.
I could record with no reluctant voice
The woods of autumn, and their hazel bowers
With milk-white clusters hung; the rod and line,
True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong
And unreproved enchantment led us on
By rocks and pools shut out from every star,
All the green summer, to forlorn cascades
Among the windings hid of mountain brooks.
—Unfading recollections! at this hour
The heart is almost mine with which I felt,
From some hilltop on sunny afternoons,
The paper kite high among fleecy clouds
Pull at her rein like an impetuous courser;
Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,
Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
Dashed headlong, and rejected by the storm.

Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwelt,
A ministration of your own was yours;
Can I forget you, being as you were
So beautiful among the pleasant fields
In which ye stood? or can I here forget
The plain and seemly countenance with which
Ye dealt out your plain comforts? Yet had ye
Delights and exultations of your own.
Eager and never weary we pursued
Our home amusements by the warm peat fire
At evening, when with pencil and smooth slate
In square divisions parceled out and all
With crosses and with ciphers scribbled o'er,
We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head
In strife too humble to be named in verse.

Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,
Cherry, or maple, sat in close array,
And to the combat, loo or whist, led on
A thick-ribbed army; not, as in the world,
Neglected and ungratefully thrown by
Even for the very service they had wrought,
But husbanded through many a long campaign.
Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few
Had changed their functions; some, plebeian cards
Which fate, beyond the promise of their birth,
Had dignified, and called to represent
The persons of departed potentates.
Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell!
Ironic diamonds—clubs, hearts, diamonds, spades,
A congregation piteously akin!
Cheap matter offered they to boyish wit,
Those sooty knaves, precipitated down
With scoffs and taunts, like Vulcan out of heaven.
The paramount ace, a moon in her eclipse,
Queens gleaming through their splendor's last decay,
And monarchs surly at the wrong sustained
By royal visages. Meanwhile abroad
Incessant rain was falling, or the frost
Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth;
And, interrupting oft that eager game,
From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice
The pent-up air, struggling to free itself,
Gave out to meadow-grounds and hills a loud,
Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves
Howling in troops along the Bothnic Main.

516. *loo*, an old-fashioned card game.
531. *Vulcan*. Vulcan was hurled from heaven by Jupiter.
543. *Bothnic Main*, the portion of the Baltic Sea which borders on Bothnia—the western part of which is in Sweden, the eastern in Finland.

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace
How Nature by extrinsic passion first
Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair,
And made me love them, may I here omit
How other pleasures have been mine, and joys
Of subtler origin; how I have felt,
Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,
Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
An intellectual charm; that calm delight
Which, if I err not, surely must belong
To those first-born affinities that fit
Our new existence to existing things,
And, in our dawn of being, constitute
The bond of union between life and joy.

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth,
And twice five summers on my mind had stamped
The faces of the moving year, even then
I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
Old as creation, drinking in a pure
Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters colored by impending clouds.

The sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays
Of Cumbria's rocky limits, they can tell
How, when the sea threw off his evening shade
And to the shepherd's hut on distant hills

545. *by extrinsic passion*, that is, by emotion arising from external objects.

551. *motions*, emotions, impulses—as in "Tintern Abbey," line 100.

553-556. The idea expressed here is found also in "Intimations of Immortality": The soul, coming from previous experiences, must be fitted, by some bonds of attraction, to earth.

Sent welcome notice of the rising moon,
How I have stood, to fancies such as these
A stranger, linking with the spectacle
No conscious memory of a kindred sight,
And bringing with me no peculiar sense
Of quietness or peace; yet have I stood,
Even while mine eye hath moved o'er many a league
Of shining water, gathering as it seemed,
Through every hairbreadth in that field of light,
New pleasure like a bee among the flowers.

Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar joy
Which, through all seasons, on a child's pursuits
Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss
Which, like a tempest, works along the blood
And is forgotten; even then I felt
Gleams like the flashing of a shield—the earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things; sometimes 'tis true,
By chance collisions and quaint accidents—
Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed
Of evil-minded fairies—yet not vain
Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
Collateral objects and appearances,
Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
Until maturer seasons called them forth
To impregnate and to elevate the mind.
—And if the vulgar joy by its own weight
Wearied itself out of the memory,
The scenes which were a witness of that joy
Remained in their substantial lineaments
Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
Were visible, a daily sight; and thus

581-599. Cf. "Tintern Abbey," lines 76-85 (see page 51).

By the impressive discipline of fear,
By pleasure and repeated happiness,
So frequently repeated, and by force
Of obscure feelings representative
Of things forgotten, these same scenes so bright,
So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,
Though yet the day was distant, did become
Habitually dear, and all their forms
And changeful colors by invisible links
Were fastened to the affections.
I began
My story early—not misled, I trust,
By an infirmity of love for days
Disowned by memory—ere the breath of spring
Planting my snowdrops among winter snows;
Nor will it seem to thee, O Friend! so prompt
In sympathy, that I have lengthened out
With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale.
Meanwhile, my hope has been that I might fetch
Invigorating thoughts from former years;
Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,
And haply meet reproaches, too, whose power
May spur me on, in manhood now mature,
To honorable toil. Yet should these hopes
Prove vain, and thus should neither I be taught
To understand myself, nor thou to know
With better knowledge how the heart was framed
Of him thou lovest; need I dread from thee
Harsh judgments, if the song be loath to quit
Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, those lovely forms
And sweet sensations that throw back our life,
And almost make remotest infancy
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining?

One end at least hath been attained; my mind
Hath been revived, and if this genial mood
Desert me not, forthwith shall be brought down
Through later years the story of my life.
The road lies plain before me—'tis a theme
Single and of determined bounds; and hence
I choose it rather at this time, than work
Of ampler or more varied argument,
Where I might be discomfited and lost.
And certain hopes are with me, that to thee
This labor will be welcome, honored friend!

[BOOK II]

SCHOOLTIME *(continued)*

[The second Book opens with and recounts in some detail the outdoor sports, boyish, but wholesome and formative, that filled the vacant hours and holidays of Wordsworth's school years at Hawkshead School, where he prepared for Cambridge. It continues:]

Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus
Daily the common range of visible things
Grew dear to me: already I began
To love the sun; a boy I loved the sun,
Not as I since have loved him, as a pledge
And surety of our earthly life, a light
Which we behold and feel we are alive;
Nor for his bounty to so many worlds—
But for this cause, that I had seen him lay
His beauty on the morning hills, had seen
The western mountain touch his setting orb,

In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess
Of happiness, my blood appeared to flow
For its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy.
And, from like feelings, humble though intense,
To patriotic and domestic love
Analogous, the moon to me was dear;
For I could dream away my purposes,
Standing to gaze upon her while she hung
Midway between the hills, as if she knew
No other region, but belonged to thee,
Yea, appertained by a peculiar right
To thee and thy gray huts, thou one dear Vale!

Those incidental charms which first attached
My heart to rural objects, day by day
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
How Nature, intervenient till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake.

* * *

'Twere long to tell
What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,
And what the summer shade, what day and night,
Evening and morning, sleep and waking, thought
From sources inexhaustible, poured forth
To feed the spirit of religious love
In which I walked with Nature. But let this
Be not forgotten, that I still retained
My first creative sensibility;
That by the regular action of the world
My soul was unsubdued. A plastic power
Abode with me; a forming hand, at times
Rebellious, acting in a devious mood;

197. *Vale,* the valley of Hawkshead.

A local spirit of his own, at war
With general tendency, but, for the most,
Subservient strictly to external things
With which it communed. An auxiliar light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendor; the melodious birds,
The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on,
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
A like dominion, and the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of my eye;
Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,
And hence my transport.
Nor should this, perchance,
Pass unrecorded, that I still had loved
The exercise and produce of a toil,
Than analytic industry to me
More pleasing, and whose character I deem
Is more poetic as resembling more
Creative agency. The song would speak
Of that interminable building reared
By observation of affinities
In objects where no brotherhood exists
To passive minds. My seventeenth year was come;
And, whether from this habit rooted now
So deeply in my mind, or from excess
In the great social principle of life
Coercing all things into sympathy,
To unorganic natures were transferred
My own enjoyments; or the power of truth
Coming in revelation, did converse
With things that really are; I, at this time,
Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.
Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,
From Nature and her overflowing soul
I had received so much, that all my thoughts

Were steeped in feeling; I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
If high the transport, great the joy I felt
Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
With every form of creature, as it looked
Toward the Uncreated with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.
One song they sang, and it was audible,
Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.

* * *

[BOOK III]

RESIDENCE AT CAMBRIDGE

[This Book begins with a short account of Wordsworth's first sight of Cambridge as he journeyed thither by coach to enter the university, 1787.]

The Evangelist St. John my patron was.
Three Gothic courts are his, and in the first
Was my abiding-place, a nook obscure;
Right underneath, the college kitchens made

46. *St. John my patron was.* That is, Wordsworth was a member of St. John's College.

A humming sound, less tunable than bees,
But hardly less industrious; with shrill notes
Of sharp command and scolding intermixed.
Near me hung Trinity's loquacious clock,
Who never let the quarters, night or day,
Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours
Twice over with a male and female voice.
Her pealing organ was my neighbor, too;
And from my pillow, looking forth by light
Of moon or favoring stars, I could behold
The antechapel where the statue stood
Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
The marble index of a mind forever
Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

Of college labors, of the lecturer's room
All studded round, as thick as chairs could stand,
With loyal students faithful to their books,
Half-and-half idlers, hardy recusants,
And honest dunces—of important days,
Examinations, when the man was weighed
As in a balance! of excessive hopes,
Tremblings withal and commendable fears,
Small jealousies, and triumphs good or bad—
Let others that know more speak as they know.
Such glory was but little sought by me,
And little won. Yet from the first crude days
Of settling time in this untried abode,
I was disturbed at times by prudent thoughts,
Wishing to hope without a hope, some fears
About my future worldly maintenance,
And, more than all, a strangeness in the mind,

61. *Newton*, Sir Isaac (1642-1727). See note on line 20, page 5. The lines following are a good example of Wordsworth's faculty of epigrammatical characterization.

A feeling that I was not for that hour,
Nor for that place.

* * *

But peace! enough
Here to record that I was mounting now
To such community with highest truth—
A track pursuing, not untrod before,
From strict analogies by thought supplied
Or consciousness not to be subdued.
To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower,
Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,
Or linked them to some feeling—the great mass
Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
That I beheld respired with inward meaning.
Add that whate'er of terror or of love
Or beauty, Nature's daily face put on
From transitory passion, unto this
I was as sensitive as waters are
To the sky's influence in a kindred mood
Of passion; was obedient as a lute
That waits upon the touches of the wind.
Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich—
I had a world about me—'twas my own;
I made it, for it only lived to me,
And to the God who sees into the heart.
Such sympathies, though rarely, were betrayed
By outward gestures and by visible looks;
Some called it madness—so indeed it was,
If child-like fruitfulness in passing joy,
If steady moods of thoughtfulness matured
To inspiration, sort with such a name;
If prophecy be madness; if things viewed
By poets in old time, and higher up
By the first men, earth's first inhabitants,

May in these tutored days no more be seen
With undisordered sight. But leaving this,
It was no madness, for the bodily eye
Amid my strongest workings evermore
Was searching out the lines of difference
As they lie hid in all external forms,
Near or remote, minute or vast; an eye
Which, from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf,
To the broad ocean and the azure heavens
Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,
Could find no surface where its power might sleep;
Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,
And by an unrelenting agency
Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.

* * *

For I, bred up 'mid Nature's luxuries,
Was a spoiled child, and, rambling like the wind,
As I had done in daily intercourse
With those crystalline rivers, solemn heights,
And mountains, ranging like a fowl of the air,
I was ill-tutored for captivity;
To quit my pleasure, and, from month to month,
Take up a station calmly on the perch
Of sedentary peace. Those lovely forms
Had also left less space within my mind,
Which, wrought upon instinctively, had found
A freshness in those objects of her love,
A winning power, beyond all other power.
Not that I slighted books—that were to lack
All sense—but other passions in me ruled,
Passions more fervent, making me less prompt
To indoor study than was wise or well,
Or suited to those years.

* * *

[BOOK IV]

SUMMER VACATION

[This Book is occupied with the events and impressions of the first summer vacation from Cambridge, which Wordsworth spent in his school-day haunts at Hawkshead. He recounts his joy at meeting again his old companions, the good dame who had long cared for him, and the kindly peasant folk of the village. He then recalls the spiritual experiences that this return brought to him.]

Those walks well worthy to be prized and loved—
Regretted!—that word, too, was on my tongue,
But they were richly laden with all good,
And cannot be remembered but with thanks
And gratitude, and perfect joy of heart—
Those walks in all their freshness now came back
Like a returning spring. When first I made
Once more the circuit of our little lake,
If ever happiness hath lodged with man,
That day consummate happiness was mine,
Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.
The sun was set, or setting, when I left
Our cottage door, and evening soon brought on
A sober hour, not winning or serene,
For cold and raw the air was, and untuned;
But as a face we love is sweetest then
When sorrow damps it, or, whatever look
It chance to wear, is sweetest if the heart

138. *little lake*, Esthwaite.
143. *cottage*, Dame Tyson's cottage, where Wordsworth had lodged for seven years. He feels that what he has accomplished is not commensurate with his privileges, and especially with possibilities which in moments of spiritual exultation, such as that which he is about to describe, seemed to lie within him.

Have fullness in herself; even so with me
It fared that evening. Gently did my soul
Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
Naked, as in the presence of her God.
While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch
A heart that had not been disconsolate:
Strength came where weakness was not known to be,
At least not felt; and restoration came
Like an intruder knocking at the door
Of unacknowledged weariness. I took
The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself.
—Of that external scene which round me lay,
Little, in this abstraction, did I see;
Remembered less; but I had inward hopes
And swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed,
Conversed with promises, had glimmering views
How life pervades the undecaying mind;
How the immortal soul with Godlike power
Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
That time can lay upon her; how on earth
Man, if he do but live within the light
Of high endeavors, daily spreads abroad
His being armed with strength that cannot fail.
Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love,
Of innocence, and holiday repose;
And more than pastoral quiet, 'mid the stir
Of boldest projects, and a peaceful end
At last, or glorious, by endurance won.
Thus musing, in a wood I sat me down
Alone, continuing there to muse. The slopes
And heights meanwhile were slowly overspread
With darkness, and before a rippling breeze
The long lake lengthened out its hoary line,

And in the sheltered coppice where I sat,
Around me from among the hazel leaves,
Now here, now there, moved by the straggling wind,
Came ever and anon a breath-like sound,
Quick as the pantings of the faithful dog,
The off-and-on companion of my walk;
And such, at times, believing them to be,
I turned my head to look if he were there;
Then into solemn thought I passed once more.

[Although he felt that he was coming to a clearer knowledge of the unseen forces surrounding him, he often found his vision crossed by the sports and pleasures into which he entered; yet again the vision gleamed forth:]

The memory of one particular hour
Doth here rise up against me. 'Mid a throng
Of maids and youths, old men, and matrons staid,
A medley of all tempers, I had passed
The night in dancing, gayety, and mirth,
With din of instruments and shuffling feet,
And glancing forms, and tapers glittering,
And unaimed prattle flying up and down;
Spirits upon the stretch, and here and there
Slight shocks of young love-liking interspersed,
Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head,
And tingled through the veins. Ere we retired,
The cock had crowed, and now the eastern sky
Was kindling, not unseen, from humble copse
And open field, through which the pathway wound,
And homeward led my steps. Magnificent
The morning rose, in memorable pomp,
Glorious as e'er I had beheld—in front,
The sea lay laughing at a distance; near,

The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
And in the meadows and the lower grounds
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—
Dews, vapors, and the melody of birds,
And laborers going forth to till the fields.
Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated spirit. On I walked
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

* * *

[BOOK V]

BOOKS

[Book v first discusses the value that books may be to youth, and shows Wordsworth's feeling that despite this value they are not of more formative service than nature. This leads him to the reminiscence that follows:]

There was a boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander!—many a time
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone
Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,

328. *Grain-tinctured,* vermilion-colored.
364-397. These lines were written in 1798 and published as a separate poem in 1800. The identity of the boy is uncertain.
365. *Winander,* Lake Windermere.

Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him; and they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
And long halloos and screams, and echoes loud,
Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild
Of jocund din; and, when a lengthened pause
Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind,
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This boy was taken from his mates, and died
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale
Where he was born; the grassy churchyard hangs
Upon a slope above the village school,
And through that churchyard when my way has led
On summer evenings, I believe that there
A long half hour together I have stood
Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies!
Even now appears before the mind's clear eye
That selfsame village church; I see her sit
(The thronéd Lady whom erewhile we hailed)
On her green hill, forgetful of this boy
Who slumbers at her feet—forgetful, too,
Of all her silent neighborhood of graves,
And listening only to the gladsome sounds

399. *church*, that at Hawkshead.

That, from the rural school ascending, play
Beneath her and about her. May she long
Behold a race of young ones like to those
With whom I herded! (easily, indeed,
We might have fed upon a fatter soil
Of arts and letters—but be that forgiven),
A race of real children; not too wise,
Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh,
And bandied up and down by love and hate;
Not unresentful where self-justified;
Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy;
Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds;
Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft
Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
Of pain, and doubt, and fear, yet yielding not
In happiness to the happiest upon earth.
Simplicity in habit, truth in speech,
Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds;
May books and Nature be their early joy!
And knowledge, rightly honored with that name—
Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power!

* * *

Here must we pause; this only let me add,
From heart-experience, and in humblest sense
Of modesty, that he, who in his youth
A daily wanderer among woods and fields
With living Nature hath been intimate,
Not only in that raw, unpracticed time
Is stirred to ecstasy, as others are,
By glittering verse; but, further, doth receive,
In measure only dealt out to himself,
Knowledge and increase of enduring joy
From the great Nature that exists in works

Of mighty poets. Visionary power
Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
Embodied in the mystery of words;
There, darkness makes abode, and all the host
Of shadowy things work endless changes—there,
As in a mansion like their proper home,
Even forms and substances are circumfused
By that transparent veil with light divine,
And, through the turnings intricate of verse,
Present themselves as objects recognized,
In flashes, and with glory not their own.

[BOOK VI]

CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS

[The sixth Book contains chiefly the account of Wordsworth's first visit to France. It will be remembered that this was a walking tour made in the summer of 1790 with Robert Jones, a Cambridge friend.]

When the third summer freed us from restraint,
A youthful friend, he too a mountaineer,
Not slow to share my wishes, took his staff,
And sallying forth, we journeyed side by side,
Bound to the distant Alps. A hardy slight
Did this unprecedented course imply
Of college studies and their set rewards;
Nor had, in truth, the scheme been formed by me
Without uneasy forethought of the pain,
The censures, and ill-omening of those

328. *set rewards.* Had Wordsworth carried out the wishes of his relatives, he would have spent this last long summer vacation in study for his final examinations, with the possibility of being awarded a fellowship.

To whom my worldly interests were dear.
But Nature then was sovereign in my mind,
And mighty forms, seizing a youthful fancy,
Had given a charter to irregular hopes.
In any age of uneventful calm
Among the nations, surely would my heart
Have been possessed by similar desire;
But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,
France standing on the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.

Lightly equipped, and but a few brief looks
Cast on the white cliffs of our native shore
From the receding vessel's deck, we chanced
To land at Calais on the very eve
Of that great federal day; and there we saw,
In a mean city, and among a few,
How bright a face is worn when joy of one
Is joy for tens of millions. Southward thence
We held our way, direct through hamlets, towns,
Gaudy with relics of that festival,
Flowers left to wither on triumphal arcs,
And window-garlands. On the public roads,
And, once, three days successively, through paths
By which our toilsome journey was abridged,
Among sequestered villages we walked
And found benevolence and blessedness
Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when spring
Hath left no corner of the land untouched;
Where elms for many and many a league in files
With their thin umbrage, on the stately roads

346. *that great federal day*, i. e., July 13, 1790, the eve of the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille.

Of that great kingdom, rustled o'er our heads,
Forever near us as we paced along.
How sweet at such a time, with such delight
On every side, in prime of youthful strength,
To feed a poet's tender melancholy
And fond conceit of sadness, with the sound
Of undulations varying as might please
The wind that swayed them; once, and more than once,
Unhoused beneath the evening star we saw
Dances of liberty, and, in late hours
Of darkness, dances in the open air
Deftly prolonged, though gray-haired lookers-on
Might waste their breath in chiding.

* * *

Oh, most beloved Friend! a glorious time,
A happy time that was; triumphant looks
Were then the common language of all eyes;
As if awaked from sleep, the nations hailed
Their great expectancy. The fife of war
Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,
A blackbird's whistle in a budding grove.
We left the Swiss exulting in the fate
Of their near neighbors; and, when shortening fast
Our pilgrimage, nor distant far from home,
We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret
For battle in the cause of Liberty.
A stripling, scarcely of the household then

761. Perhaps Wordsworth is using the word "fate" in the sense of "fortune," meaning the fortunate deliverance of France from despotism.

764. *Brabant.* Brabant, now part of Belgium, but then an Austrian possession, was making a stand, soon to prove unsuccessful, against the new Emperor, Joseph II.

Of social life, I looked upon these things
As from a distance; heard, and saw, and felt,
Was touched, but with no intimate concern;
I seemed to move along them, as a bird
Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues
Its sport, or feeds in its proper element;
I wanted not that joy, I did not need
Such help; the ever-living universe,
Turn where I might, was opening out its glories,
And the independent spirit of pure youth
Called forth, at every season, new delights,
Spread round my steps like sunshine o'er green fields.

[BOOK VIII*]

RETROSPECT.—LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO LOVE OF MAN

[This Book, a selection from which is given below, turns back to pleasing experiences of childhood that seemed significant in their molding influence.]

A rambling schoolboy, thus
I felt his presence in his own domain,
As of a lord and master, or a power,
Or genius, under Nature, under God,
Presiding; and severest solitude
Had more commanding looks when he was there.
When up the lonely brooks on rainy days

*Book VII (omitted), *Residence in London*, is one of the least important in *The Prelude*, since Wordsworth did not consider especially formative the experiences that it treats.

257. *his presence*, i. e., the presence of the shepherd discussed in the preceding lines, "a freeman, wedded to his life of hope and hazard."

Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills
By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes
Have glanced upon him distant a few steps,
In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,
His sheep like Greenland bears; or, as he stepped
Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,
His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
By the deep radiance of the setting sun;
Or him have I descried in distant sky,
A solitary object and sublime,
Above all height! like an aërial cross
Stationed alone upon a spiry rock
Of the Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was man
Ennobled outwardly before my sight,
And thus my heart was early introduced
To an unconscious love and reverence
Of human nature; hence the human form
To me became an index of delight,
Of grace and honor, power and worthiness.
Meanwhile this creature—spiritual almost
As those of books, but more exalted far;
Far more of an imaginative form
Than the gay Corin of the groves, who lives
For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour,
In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst—
Was, for the purposes of kind, a man
With the most common; husband, father; learned,
Could teach, admonish; suffered with the rest
From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear;
Of this I little saw, cared less for it,
But something must have felt.

285. *Corin*, a conventional name for a shepherd, as Phyllis is for a shepherdess.

Call ye these appearances—
Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,
This sanctity of Nature given to man—
A shadow, a delusion, ye who pore
On the dead letter, miss the spirit of things;
Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
Instinct with vital functions, but a block
Or waxen image which yourselves have made,
And ye adore! But blessed be the God
Of Nature and of Man that this was so;
That men before my inexperienced eyes
Did first present themselves thus purified,
Removed, and to a distance that was fit;
And so we all of us in some degree
Are led to knowledge, wheresoever led,
And howsoever; were it otherwise,
And we found evil fast as we find good
In our first years, or think that it is found,
How could the innocent heart bear up and live!
But doubly fortunate my lot; not here
Alone, that something of a better life
Perhaps was round me than it is the privilege
Of most to move in, but that first I looked
At man through objects that were great or fair;
First communed with him by their help. And thus
Was founded a sure safeguard and defense
Against the weight of meanness, selfish cares,
Coarse manners, vulgar passions, that beat in
On all sides from the ordinary world
In which we traffic.

* * *

[BOOK IX]

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE

[The ninth Book, which recalls Wordsworth's experiences of the years 1791-1792, begins with a brief reference to his stay in London during the summer of 1791. He went to France in the autumn of that year, as he relates below:]

France lured me forth: the realm that I had crossed
So lately, journeying toward the snow-clad Alps.
But now, relinquishing the scrip and staff,
And all enjoyment which the summer sun
Sheds round the steps of those who meet the day
With motion constant as his own, I went
Prepared to sojourn in a pleasant town,
Washed by the current of the stately Loire.

Through Paris lay my readiest course, and there
Sojourning a few days, I visited
In haste, each spot of old or recent fame,
The latter chiefly; from the field of Mars
Down to the suburbs of St. Antony,
And from Montmarte southward to the Dome
Of Geneviève. In both her clamorous Halls,
The National Synod and the Jacobins,
I saw the Revolutionary Power
Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms;

40. *pleasant town,* Orleans. Because of the reputed purity of the French spoken there, this city had long been a favorite residence for foreigners learning French.

43-48. In brief, he traversed Paris east and west, north and south.

49. *National Synod. . . . Jacobins.* The National Assembly was the governing body of France. The Jacobins were members of a radical political club that held its debates in the hired hall of the Jacobin Convent. This club was as influential as the National Assembly.

The Arcades I traversed, in the palace huge
Of Orleans; coasted round and round the line
Of tavern, brothel, gaming-house, and shop,
Great rendezvous of worst and best, the walk
Of all who had a purpose, or had not;
I stared and listened, with a stranger's ears,
To hawkers and haranguers, hubbub wild!
And hissing factionists with ardent eyes,
In knots, or pairs, or single. Not a look
Hope takes, or Doubt or Fear is forced to wear,
But seemed there present; and I scanned them all,
Watched every gesture uncontrollable,
Of anger, and vexation, and despite,
All side by side, and struggling face to face,
With gayety and dissolute idleness.

Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
Of the Bastille, I sat in the open sun,
And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,
And pocketed the relic, in the guise
Of an enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,
I looked for something that I could not find,
Affecting more emotion than I felt;
For 'tis most certain that these various sights,
However potent their first shock, with me
Appeared to recompense the traveler's pains
Less than the painted Magdalene of Le Brun,
A beauty exquisitely wrought, with hair
Disheveled, gleaming eyes, and rueful cheek
Pale and bedropped with everflowing tears.

52. *Arcades*, that is, the cloisters of the Palais Royale, given by Louis XIV to the Duke of Orleans.
68. *Bastille*. The Bastille, symbol of tyranny, had been torn down by order of the Assembly, following its storming by the citizens a year before.
77. *Le Brun*, Charles (1619-1690), court painter of Louis XIV.

But hence to my more permanent abode
I hasten; there, by novelties in speech,
Domestic manners, customs, gestures, looks,
And all the attire of ordinary life,
Attention was engrossed; and, thus amused,
I stood, 'mid those concussions, unconcerned,
Tranquil almost, and careless as a flower
Glassed in a greenhouse, or a parlor shrub
That spreads its leaves in unmolested peace,
While every bush and tree, the country through,
Is shaking to the roots—indifference this
Which may seem strange—but I was unprepared
With needful knowledge, had abruptly passed
Into a theater whose stage was filled
And busy with an action far advanced.
Like others, I had skimmed, and sometimes read
With care, the master pamphlets of the day;
Nor wanted such half-insight as grew wild
Upon that meager soil, helped out by talk
And public news; but having never seen
A chronicle that might suffice to show
Whence the main organs of the public power
Had sprung, their transmigrations, when and how
Accomplished, giving thus unto events
A form and body; all things were to me
Loose and disjointed, and the affections left
Without a vital interest. At that time,
Moreover, the first storm was overblown,
And the strong hand of outward violence
Locked up in quiet. For myself, I fear
Now in connection with so great a theme
To speak (as I must be compelled to do)
Of one so unimportant; night by night
Did I frequent the formal haunts of men,
Whom, in the city, privilege of birth

Sequestered from the rest, societies
Polished in arts, and in punctilio versed;
Whence, and from deeper causes, all discourse
Of good and evil of the time was shunned
With scrupulous care; but these restrictions soon
Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew
Into a noisier world, and thus ere long
Became a patriot; and my heart was all
Given to the people, and my love was theirs.

[In Orleans he became acquainted with many French military men, most of whom were awaiting a favorable chance to undo what had been done toward constitutional government. One of these, however, Michael Beaupuy, who became a general and was killed in the service, was of the liberal party, as Wordsworth relates:]

Among that band of officers was one,
Already hinted at, of other mold—
A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,
And with an oriental loathing spurned,
As of a different caste. A meeker man
Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries
Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then
Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,
As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,
When foot hath crushed them. He through the events
Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
As through a book, an old romance, or tale
Of fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
With the most noble, but unto the poor
Among mankind he was in service bound,
As by some tie invisible. oaths professed
To a religious order. Man he loved

As man; and, to the mean and the obscure,
And all the homely in their homely works,
Transferred a courtesy which had no air
Of condescension; but did rather seem
A passion and a gallantry, like that
Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
Had paid to woman; somewhat vain he was,
Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,
But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy
Diffused around him, while he was intent
On works of love or freedom, or revolved
Complacently the progress of a cause,
Whereof he was a part; yet this was meek
And placid, and took nothing from the man
That was delightful. Oft in solitude
With him did I discourse about the end
Of civil government and its wisest forms,
Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,
Custom and habit, novelty and change;
Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
For patrimonial honor set apart,
And ignorance in the laboring multitude.
For he, to all intolerance indisposed,
Balanced these contemplations in his mind;
And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgment
Than later days allowed; carried about me,
With less alloy to its integrity,
The experience of past ages, as, through help
Of books and common life, it makes sure way
To youthful minds, by objects over near
Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled
By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

* * *

And when we chanced
One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,
Who crept along, fitting her languid gait
Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord
Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands
Was busy knitting in a heartless mood
Of solitude, and at the sight my friend
In agitation said, "'Tis against *that*
That we are fighting," I with him believed
That a benignant spirit was abroad
Which might not be withstood, that poverty
Abject as this would in a little time
Be found no more, that we should see the earth
Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,
All institutes forever blotted out
That legalized exclusion, empty pomp
Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,
Whether by edict of the one or few;
And finally, as sum and crown of all,
Should see the people having a strong hand
In framing their own laws; whence better days
To all mankind. But, these things set apart,
Was not this single confidence enough
To animate the mind that ever turned
A thought to human welfare—that, henceforth,
Captivity by mandate without law
Should cease; and open accusation lead
To sentence in the hearing of the world,
And open punishment, if not the air

536. *Captivity by mandate*, etc. Under the French monarchy, "lettres de cachet" were issued by royal decree, imprisoning a subject without right of trial or inquiry during the king's pleasure. Powerful nobles were granted these in blank, by the king's favor, and used them against their enemies.

Be free to breathe in, and the heart of man
Dread nothing?

* * *

[BOOK X]

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE *(continued)*

[Book X begins with an account of the struggles within the French revolutionary government following Robespierre's rise to power. Meanwhile Wordsworth, after fourteen months in France, settled for a few months in London, then agitated over legislation to abolish the British slave trade. He refers to this strife in the first lines that follow:]

For myself, I own
That this particular strife had wanted power
To rivet my affections; nor did now
Its unsuccessful issue much excite
My sorrow; for I brought with me the faith
That, if France prospered, good men would not long
Pay fruitless worship to humanity,
And this most rotten branch of human shame,
Object, so seemed it, of superfluous pains,
Would fall together with its parent tree.
What, then, were my emotions, when in arms
Britain put forth her freeborn strength in league,
Oh, pity and shame! with those confederate powers!
Not in my single self alone I found,
But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,
Change and subversion from that hour. No shock
Given to my moral nature had I known
Down to that very moment; neither lapse
Nor turn of sentiment that might be named

265. *confederate powers,* Prussia and Austria, leagued in war against France for the restoration of the ancient French monarchy.

A revolution, save at this one time;
All else was progress on the selfsame path
On which, with a diversity of pace,
I had been traveling; this a stride at once
Into another region. As a light
And pliant harebell, swinging in the breeze
On some gray rock—its birthplace—so had I
Wantoned, fast rooted on the ancient tower
Of my beloved country, wishing not
A happier fortune than to wither there.
Now was I from that pleasant station torn
And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced,
Yea, afterwards—truth most painful to record!—
Exulted, in the triumph of my soul,
When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
Left without glory on the field, or driven,
Brave hearts! to shameful flight. It was a grief—
Grief call it not, 'twas anything but that—
A conflict of sensations without name,
Of which *he* only, who may love the sight
Of a village steeple, as I do, can judge,
When, in the congregation bending all
To their great Father, prayers were offered up,
Or praises for our country's victories;
And, 'mid the simple worshipers, perchance
I only, like an uninvited guest
Whom no one owed, sat silent, shall I add,
Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

* * *

In France, the men, who, for their desperate ends,
Had plucked up mercy by the roots, were glad
Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before
In wicked pleas, were strong as demons now;

And thus, on every side beset with foes,
The goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of few
Spread into madness of the many.

* * *

They found their joy,
They made it proudly, eager as a child
(If like desires of innocent little ones
May with such heinous appetites be compared),
Pleased in some open field to exercise
A toy that mimics with revolving wings
The motion of a windmill; though the air
Do of itself blow fresh, and make the vanes
Spin in his eyesight, *that* contents him not,
But, with the plaything at arm's length, he sets
His front against the blast, and runs amain,
That it may whirl the faster.
Amid the depth
Of those enormities, even thinking minds
Forgot, at seasons, whence they had their being;
Forgot that such a sound was ever heard
As Liberty upon earth; yet all beneath
Her innocent authority was wrought,
Nor could have been, without her blessed name.
The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour
Of her composure, felt that agony,
And gave it vent in her last words. O Friend!
It was a lamentable time for man,
Whether a hope had e'er been his or not;
A woeful time for them whose hopes survived
The shock; most woeful for those few who still

375. *those enormities,* i. e., of the Reign of Terror, 1793-1794.
381. *wife of Roland,* Madame Roland de la Platière, who was executed in 1793. At the foot of the scaffold she is said to have exclaimed, "O Liberty! Liberty! how many crimes are committed in thy name!"

Were flattered, and had trust in human kind—
They had the deepest feeling of the grief.
Meanwhile the invaders fared as they deserved:
The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms,
And throttled with an infant godhead's might
The snakes about her cradle; that was well,
And as it should be; yet no cure for them
Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be
Hereafter brought in charge against mankind.
Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!
Were my day-thoughts—my nights were miserable;
Through months, through years, long after the last beat
Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep
To me came rarely charged with natural gifts,
Such ghastly visions had I of despair
And tyranny, and implements of death;
And innocent victims sinking under fear,
And momentary hope, and worn-out prayer,
Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds
For sacrifice, and struggling with fond mirth
And levity in dungeons, where the dust
Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene
Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me
In long orations, which I strove to plead
Before unjust tribunals—with a voice
Laboring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt
In the last place of refuge—my own soul.

* * *

392-393. *throttled . . . the snakes.* The French armies of the Republic were everywhere victorious over the coalition.

402. *Such ghastly visions*, etc. There is some evidence to the effect that Wordsworth made a secret journey to France in 1793 and actually witnessed the kind of atrocities here described. Carlyle affirmed that Wordsworth told him that he had been present at the execution of Gorsas in Paris, October, 1793. Other evidence and inference seem to point in the same direction.

Then was the truth received into my heart,
That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,
If from the affliction somewhere do not grow
Honor which could not else have been, a faith,
An elevation, and a sanctity,
If new strength be not given nor old restored,
The blame is ours, not Nature's. When a taunt
Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,
Saying, "Behold the harvest that we reap
From popular government and equality,"
I clearly saw that neither these nor aught
Of wild belief engrafted on their names
By false philosophy had caused the woe,
But a terrific reservoir of guilt
And ignorance filled up from age to age,
That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
But burst and spread in deluge through the land.

* * *

[BOOK XI]

FRANCE *(concluded)*

[The first part of Book XI recounts how, after the death of Robespierre, "authority in France put on a milder aspect," and continues:]

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, us who were strong in love!
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven! O times,

In which the meager, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
When most intent on making of herself
A prime enchantress—to assist the work,
Which then was going forward in her name!
Not favored spots alone, but the whole earth,
The beauty wore of promise—that which sets
(As at some moments might not be unfelt
Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
The budding rose above the rose full blown.
What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
The playfellows of fancy, who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtlety, and strength
Their ministers—who in lordly wise had stirred
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And dealt with whatsoever they found there
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it—they, too, who of gentle mood
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
And in the region of their peaceful selves—
Now was it that *both* found, the meek and lofty
Did both find, helpers to their hearts' desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish—
Were called upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia—subterranean fields—

113. *Reason.* It was about this time that Wordsworth came under the strong influence of William Godwin. On Godwin's faith in reason as the panacea for all social ills, see the Introduction, page xlvii.

133. *motions.* See note on line 551, page 266.

Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us—the place where, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all!

* * *

In the main outline, such it might be said
Was my condition, till with open war
Britain opposed the liberties of France.
This threw me first out of the pale of love;
Soured and corrupted, upwards to the source,
My sentiments; was not, as hitherto,
A swallowing up of lesser things in great,
But change of them into their contraries;
And thus a way was opened for mistakes
And false conclusions, in degree as gross,
In kind more dangerous. What had been a pride,
Was now a shame; my likings and my loves
Ran in new channels, leaving old ones dry;
And hence a blow that, in maturer age,
Would but have touched the judgment, struck more deep
Into sensations near the heart. Meantime,
As from the first, wild theories were afloat,
To whose pretensions, sedulously urged,
I had but lent a careless ear, assured
That time was ready to set all things right,
And that the multitude, so long oppressed,
Would be oppressed no more.

* * *

But now, become oppressors in their turn,
Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defense

For one of conquest, losing sight of all
Which they had struggled for; up mounted now,
Openly in the eye of earth and heaven,
The scale of liberty. I read her doom,
With anger vexed, with disappointment sore,
But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame
Of a false prophet. While resentment rose
Striving to hide, what nought could heal, the wounds
Of mortified presumption, I adhered
More firmly to old tenets, and, to prove
Their temper, strained them more; and thus, in heat
Of contest, did opinions every day
Grow into consequence, till round my mind
They clung, as if they were its life, nay more,
The very being of the immortal soul.

* * *

I summoned my best skill, and toiled, intent
To anatomize the frame of social life;
Yea, the whole body of society
Searched to its heart. Share with me, Friend! the wish
That some dramatic tale, endued with shapes
Livelier, and flinging out less guarded words
Than suit the work we fashion, might set forth
What then I learned, or think I learned, of truth,
And the errors into which I fell, betrayed
By present objects, and by reasonings false
From their beginnings, inasmuch as drawn
Out of a heart that had been turned aside
From Nature's way by outward accidents,
And which was thus confounded, more and more
Misguided, and misguiding. So I fared,
Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind,

Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
Her titles and her honors; now believing,
Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
Of obligation, what the rule and whence
The sanction; till, demanding formal *proof,*
And seeking it in everything, I lost
All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
Yielded up moral questions in despair.

This was the crisis of that strong disease,
This the soul's last and lowest ebb; I drooped,
Deeming our blessed reason of least use
Where wanted most: "The lordly attributes
Of will and choice," I bitterly exclaimed,
"What are they but a mockery of a Being
Who hath in no concerns of his a test
Of good and evil; knows not what to fear
Or hope for, what to covet or to shun;
And who, if those could be discerned, would yet
Be little profited, would see, and ask
Where is the obligation to enforce?
And, to acknowledged law rebellious, still,
As selfish passion urged, would act amiss;
The dupe of folly, or the slave of crime."

Depressed, bewildered thus, I did not walk
With scoffers, seeking light and gay revenge
From indiscriminate laughter, nor sat down

308. *Deeming our blessed reason,* etc. Losing faith even in reason, Wordsworth now falls into the depths of pessimism and passes through the greatest spiritual crisis of his career. Five years later Coleridge described his friend as "half-atheist."

In reconcilement with an utter waste
Of intellect; such sloth I could not brook
(Too well I loved, in that my spring of life,
Painstaking thoughts, and truth, their dear reward),
But turned to abstract science, and there sought
Work for the reasoning faculty enthroned
Where the disturbances of space and time—
Whether in matters various, properties
Inherent, or from human will and power
Derived—find no admission. Then it was—
Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good!—
That the beloved sister in whose sight
Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice
Of sudden admonition—like a brook
That did but *cross* a lonely road, and now
Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn,
Companion never lost through many a league—
Maintained for me a saving intercourse
With my true self; for, though bedimmed and changed
Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed
Than as a clouded and a waning moon.
She whispered still that brightness would return,
She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
A poet, made me seek beneath that name,
And that alone, my office upon earth;
And, lastly, as hereafter will be shown,
If willing audience fail not, Nature's self,
By all varieties of human love
Assisted, led me back through opening day
To those sweet counsels between head and heart
Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with peace,
Which, through the later sinkings of this cause,
Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now

In the catastrophe (for so they dream,
And nothing less), when, finally to close
And seal up all the gains of France, a Pope
Is summoned in to crown an Emperor—
This last opprobrium, when we see a people,
That once looked up in faith, as if to Heaven
For manna, take a lesson from the dog
Returning to his vomit; when the sun
That rose in splendor, was alive, and moved
In exultation with a living pomp
Of clouds—his glory's natural retinue—
Hath dropped all functions by the gods bestowed,
And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,
Sets like an opera phantom.
Thus, O Friend!
Through times of honor and through times of shame
Descending, have I faithfully retraced
The perturbations of a youthful mind
Under a long-lived storm of great events—
A story destined for thy ear, who now,
Among the fallen of nations, dost abide
Where Etna, over hill and valley, casts
His shadow stretching toward Syracuse,
The city of Timoleon! Righteous Heaven!
How are the mighty prostrated! They first,
They first of all that breathe should have awaked
When the great voice was heard from out the tombs
Of ancient heroes. If I suffered grief
For ill-requited France, by many deemed
A trifler only in her proudest day;
Have been distressed to think of what she once

360. *Emperor.* Napoleon was crowned Emperor of the French by Pope Pius VII, at Paris, December 2, 1804.

375. *thy ear.* It will be recalled that at this time Coleridge, to whom *The Prelude* is addressed, was in Malta or traveling elsewhere about the Mediterranean.

Promised, now is; a far more sober cause
Thine eyes must see of sorrow in a land
To the reanimating influence lost
Of memory, to virtue lost and hope,
Though with the wreck of loftier years bestrewn.

But indignation works where hope is not,
And thou, O Friend! wilt be refreshed. There is
One great society alone on earth:
The noble Living and the noble Dead.

* * *

[BOOK XII]

IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED

Long time have human ignorance and guilt
Detained us, on what spectacles of woe
Compelled to look, and inwardly oppressed
With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,
Confusion of the judgment, zeal decayed,
And, lastly, utter loss of hope itself
And things to hope for! Not with these began
Our song, and not with these our song must end.—
Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs,
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
Feelingly watched, might teach man's haughty race
How without injury to take, to give
Without offense; ye who, as if to show
The wondrous influence of power gently used,

Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,
And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds
Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks,
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
By day, a quiet sound in silent night;
Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth
In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,
Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is
To interpose the covert of your shades,
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
And outward troubles, between man himself,
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:
Oh! that I had a music and a voice
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell
What ye have done for me.

[Then, after recalling how the soul of nature had sustained and governed him in boyhood and youth, Wordsworth continues:]

There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct preëminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired;
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount,
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.

208 ff. Cf. Emerson, "The Over-Soul": "There is a difference between one and another hour of life, in their authority and subsequent effect." This belief, supported by the German transcendentalists, is everywhere present in the poems of Wordsworth.

This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life that give
Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,
The mind is lord and master—outward sense
The obedient servant of her will. Such moments
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
From our first childhood. I remember well,
That once, while yet my inexperienced hand
Could scarcely hold a bridle, with proud hopes
I mounted, and we journeyed toward the hills;
An ancient servant of my father's house
Was with me, my encourager and guide.
We had not traveled long, ere some mischance
Disjoined me from my comrade; and, through fear
Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor
I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length
Came to a bottom, where in former times
A murderer had been hung in iron chains.
The gibbet-mast had moldered down, the bones
And iron case were gone; but on the turf,
Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,
Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name.
The monumental letters were inscribed
In times long past; but still, from year to year,
By superstition of the neighborhood,
The grass is cleared away, and to this hour
The characters are fresh and visible.
A casual glance had shown them, and I fled,
Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road;
Then, reascending the bare common, saw
A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
The beacon on the summit, and, more near,
A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,
And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,

An ordinary sight; but I should need
Colors and words that are unknown to man,
To paint the visionary dreariness
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
Invested moorland waste, and naked pool,
The beacon crowning the lone eminence,
The female and her garments vexed and tossed
By the strong wind. When, in the blessed hours
Of early love, the loved one at my side,
I roamed, in daily presence of this scene,
Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
And on the melancholy beacon fell
A spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam;
And think ye not with radiance more sublime
For these remembrances, and for the power
They had left behind? So feeling comes in aid
Of feeling, and diversity of strength
Attends us, if but once we have been strong.
Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honors. I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands; but this I feel,
That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,
Else never canst receive. The days gone by
Return upon me almost from the dawn
Of life: the hiding-places of man's power
Open; I would approach them, but they close.
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
May scarcely see at all; and I would give,
While yet we may, as far as words can give,
Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,
Such is my hope, the spirit of the Past
For future restoration.

* * *

[BOOK XIV*]

CONCLUSION

In one of those excursions (may they ne'er
Fade from remembrance!) through the northern tracts
Of Cambria ranging with a youthful friend,
I left Bethgelert's huts at couching-time,
And westward took my way, to see the sun
Rise, from the top of Snowdon. To the door
Of a rude cottage at the mountain's base
We came, and roused the shepherd who attends
The adventurous stranger's steps, a trusty guide;
Then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth.

It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night,
Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping fog
Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky;
But, undiscouraged, we began to climb
The mountain-side. The mist soon girt us round,
And, after ordinary travelers' talk
With our conductor, pensively we sank
Each into commerce with his private thoughts.
Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself
Was nothing either seen or heard that checked
Those musings or diverted, save that once
The shepherd's lurcher, who, among the crags,
Had to his joy unearthed a hedgehog, teased
His coiled-up prey with barkings turbulent.
This small adventure, for even such it seemed
In that wild place and at the dead of night,
Being over and forgotten, on we wound

*Book XIII (omitted), *Imagination and Taste, How Impaired and Restored (concluded)*, proceeds in the same vein as Book XII.

In silence as before. With forehead bent
Earthward, as if in opposition set
Against an enemy, I panted up
With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts.
Thus might we wear a midnight hour away,
Ascending at loose distance each from each,
And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band;
When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,
And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause,
For instantly a light upon the turf
Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up,
The moon hung naked in a firmament
Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.
A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
All over this still ocean; and beyond,
Far, far beyond, the solid vapors stretched,
In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
Into the main Atlantic, that appeared
To dwindle, and give up his majesty,
Usurped upon far as the sight could reach.
Not so the ethereal vault; encroachment none
Was there, nor loss; only the inferior stars
Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light
In the clear presence of the full-orbed moon,
Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed
Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay
All meek and silent, save that through a rift—
Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,
A fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing-place—
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
Innumerable, roaring with one voice!

Heard over earth and sea, and, in that hour,
For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens.

When into air had partially dissolved
That vision, given to spirits of the night
And three chance human wanderers, in calm thought
Reflected, it appeared to me the type
Of a majestic intellect, its acts
And its possessions, what it has and craves,
What in itself it is, and would become.
There I beheld the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
By recognitions of transcendent power,
In sense conducting to ideal form,
In soul of more than mortal privilege.
One function, above all, of such a mind
Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth,
'Mid circumstances awful and sublime,
That mutual domination which she loves
To exert upon the face of outward things,
So molded, joined, abstracted, so endowed
With interchangeable supremacy,
That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive,
And cannot choose but feel. The power, which all
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express
Resemblance of that glorious faculty
That higher minds bear with them as their own.
This is the very spirit in which they deal
With the whole compass of the universe:

They from their native selves can send abroad
Kindred mutations; for themselves create
A like existence; and, whene'er it dawns
Created for them, catch it, or are caught
By its inevitable mastery,
Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound
Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.
Them the enduring and the transient both
Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things
From least suggestions; ever on the watch,
Willing to work and to be wrought upon,
They need not extraordinary calls
To rouse them; in a world of life they live,
By sensible impressions not enthralled,
But by their quickening impulse made more prompt
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
And with the generations of mankind
Spread over time, past, present, and to come,
Age after age, till Time shall be no more.
Such minds are truly from the Deity,
For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
That flesh can know is theirs—the consciousness
Of Whom they are, habitually infused
Through every image and through every thought,
And all affections by communion raised
From earth to heaven, from human to divine;
Hence endless occupation for the soul,
Whether discursive or intuitive;
Hence cheerfulness for acts of daily life,
Emotions which best foresight need not fear,
Most worthy then of trust when most intense.
Hence, amid ills that vex and wrongs that crush
Our hearts—if here the words of Holy Writ

May with fit reverence be applied—that peace
Which passeth understanding, that repose
In moral judgments which from this pure source
Must come, or will by man be sought in vain.

Oh! who is he that hath his whole life long
Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself?
For this alone is genuine liberty;
Where is the favored being who hath held
That course unchecked, unerring, and untired,
In one perpetual progress smooth and bright?—
A humbler destiny have we retraced,
And told of lapse and hesitating choice,
And backward wanderings along thorny ways;
Yet—compassed round by mountain solitudes,
Within whose solemn temple I received
My earliest visitations, careless then
Of what was given me; and which now I range,
A meditative, oft a suffering man—
Do I declare—in accents which, from truth
Deriving cheerful confidence, shall blend
Their modulation with these vocal streams—
That, whatsoever falls my better mind,
Revolving with the accidents of life,
May have sustained, that, howsoe'er misled,
Never did I, in quest of right and wrong,
Tamper with conscience from a private aim;
Nor was in any public hope the dupe
Of selfish passions; nor did ever yield
Willfully to mean cares or low pursuits,
But shrunk with apprehensive jealousy
From every combination which might aid
The tendency, too potent in itself,

Of use and custom to bow down the soul
Under a growing weight of vulgar sense,
And substitute a universe of death
For that which moves with light and life informed,
Actual, divine, and true. To fear and love,
To love as prime and chief, for there fear ends,
Be this ascribed; to early intercourse,
In presence of sublime or beautiful forms,
With the adverse principles of pain and joy—
Evil as one is rashly named by men
Who know not what they speak. By love subsists
All lasting grandeur, by pervading love;
That gone, we are as dust.—Behold the fields
In balmy springtime full of rising flowers
And joyous creatures; see that pair, the lamb
And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways
Shall touch thee to the heart; thou callest this love,
And not inaptly so, for love it is,
Far as it carries thee. In some green bower
Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there
The One who is thy choice of all the world;
There linger, listening, gazing, with delight
Impassioned, but delight how pitiable!
Unless this love by a still higher love
Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe;
Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,
By Heaven inspired; that frees from chains the soul,
Lifted, in union with the purest, best,
Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise
Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's throne.

This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist
Without Imagination, which, in truth,
Is but another name for absolute power

And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And Reason in her most exalted mood.
This faculty hath been the feeding source
Of our long labor: we have traced the stream
From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard
Its natal murmur; followed it to light
And open day; accompanied its course
Among the ways of Nature, for a time
Lost sight of it bewildered and engulfed;
Then given it greeting as it rose once more
In strength, reflecting from its placid breast
The works of man and face of human life;
And lastly, from its progress have we drawn
Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
Of human Being, Eternity, and God.

* * *

1801-1805 1850

From THE EXCURSION

[BOOK II]

THE SOLITARY

[For the general idea and purpose of *The Excursion*, see page 409. *The Excursion* is mainly a philosophical discourse among three or four persons. The incident here described, though related by another of the characters of the poem, was doubtless one of Wordsworth's own experiences in the mountains.]

So was he lifted gently from the ground,
And with their freight homeward the shepherds moved
Through the dull mist, I following—when a step,
A single step, that freed me from the skirts
Of the blind vapor, opened to my view
Glory beyond all glory ever seen
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul!
The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
Was of a mighty city—boldly say
A wilderness of building, sinking far
And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth,
Far sinking into splendor—without end!
Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,
With alabaster domes, and silver spires,
And blazing terrace upon terrace, high
Uplifted; here, serene pavilions bright,
In avenues disposed; there, towers begirt
With battlements that on their restless fronts
Bore stars—illumination of all gems!
By earthly nature had the effect been wrought
Upon the dark materials of the storm
Now pacified; on them, and on the coves

And mountain-steeps and summits, whereunto
The vapors had receded, taking there
Their station under a cerulean sky.
Oh, 'twas an unimaginable sight!
Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks and emerald turf,
Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,
Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,
Molten together, and composing thus,
Each lost in each, that marvelous array
Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge
Fantastic pomp of structure without name,
In fleecy folds voluminous, enwrapped.
Right in the midst, where interspace appeared
Of open court, an object like a throne
Under a shining canopy of state
Stood fixed; and fixed resemblances were seen
To implements of ordinary use,
But vast in size, in substance glorified;
Such as by Hebrew prophets were beheld
In vision—forms uncouth of mightiest power
For admiration and mysterious awe.
This little vale, a dwelling-place of man,
Lay low beneath my feet; 'twas visible—
I saw not, but I felt that it was there.
That which I *saw* was the revealed abode
Of spirits in beatitude: my heart
Swelled in my breast.—"I have been dead," I cried,
"And now I live! Oh! wherefore *do* I live?"
And with that pang I prayed to be no more!—
—But I forget our charge, as utterly
I then forgot him. There I stood and gazed;
The apparition faded not away,
And I descended.

* * *

[BOOK IV]

DESPONDENCY CORRECTED

[Book IV is chiefly, including the extract given here, the discourse of one of the characters, who attempts to console a man who has been cast down through great personal bereavements, and through the failure of hopes placed in the French Revolution. The close of the extract is a deliberate summing up of Wordsworth's doctrine of the power of nature to influence the soul.]

"As men from men
Do, in the constitution of their souls,
Differ, by mystery not to be explained;
And as we fall by various ways, and sink
One deeper than another, self-condemned
Through manifold degrees of guilt and shame;
So manifold and various are the ways
Of restoration, fashioned to the steps
Of all infirmity, and tending all
To the same point, attainable by all—
Peace in ourselves, and union with our God.
For you, assuredly, a hopeful road
Lies open: we have heard from you a voice
At every moment softened in its course
By tenderness of heart; have seen your eye,
Even like an altar lit by fire from heaven,
Kindle before us.—Your discourse this day,
That, like the fabled Lethe, wished to flow
In creeping sadness, through oblivious shades
Of death and night, has caught at every turn
The colors of the sun. Access for you
Is yet preserved to principles of truth,
Which the imaginative will upholds

In seats of wisdom, not to be approached
By the inferior faculty that molds,
With her minute and speculative pains,
Opinion, ever changing! I have seen
A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell;
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy; for from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation. Here you stand,
Adore, and worship, when you know it not;
Pious beyond the intention of your thought;
Devout above the meaning of your will.
—Yes, you have felt, and may not cease to feel.
The estate of man would be indeed forlorn
If false conclusions of the reasoning power
Made the eye blind, and closed the passages
Through which the ear converses with the heart.
Has not the soul, the being of your life,
Received a shock of awful consciousness,
In some calm season, when these lofty rocks
At night's approach bring down the unclouded sky,
To rest upon their circumambient walls;

A temple framing of dimensions vast,
And yet not too enormous for the sound
Of human anthems—choral song, or burst
Sublime of instrumental harmony,
To glorify the Eternal! What if these
Did never break the stillness that prevails
Here—if the solemn nightingale be mute,
And the soft woodlark here did never chant
Her vespers—Nature fails not to provide
Impulse and utterance. The whispering air
Sends inspiration from the shadowy heights,
And blind recesses of the caverned rocks;
The little rills, and waters numberless,
Inaudible by daylight, blend their notes
With the loud streams: and often, at the hour
When issue forth the first pale stars, is heard,
Within the circuit of this fabric huge,
One voice—the solitary raven, flying
Athwart the concave of the dark blue dome,
Unseen, perchance above all power of sight—
An iron knell! with echoes from afar
Faint—and still fainter—as the cry, with which
The wanderer accompanies her flight
Through the calm region, fades upon the ear,
Diminishing by distance till it seemed
To expire; yet from the abyss is caught again,
And yet again recovered!
But descending
From these imaginative heights, that yield
Far-stretching views into eternity,
Acknowledge that to Nature's humbler power
Your cherished sullenness is forced to bend
Even here, where her amenities are sown

With sparing hand. Then trust yourself abroad
To range her blooming bowers, and spacious fields,
Where on the labors of the happy throng
She smiles, including in her wide embrace
City, and town, and tower, and sea with ships
Sprinkled; be our companion while we track
Her rivers populous with gliding life;
While, free as air, o'er printless sands we march,
Or pierce the gloom of her majestic woods;
Roaming, or resting under grateful shade
In peace and meditative cheerfulness;
Where living things, and things inanimate,
Do speak, at Heaven's command, to eye and ear,
And speak to social reason's inner sense,
With inarticulate language.
For, the man—
Who, in this spirit, communes with the forms
Of nature, who with understanding heart
Both knows and loves such objects as excite
No morbid passions, no disquietude,
No vengeance, and no hatred—needs must feel
The joy of that pure principle of love
So deeply, that, unsatisfied with aught
Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose
But seek for objects of a kindred love
In fellow-natures and a kindred joy.
Accordingly he by degrees perceives
His feelings of aversion softened down;
A holy tenderness pervade his frame.
His sanity of reason not impaired,
Say rather, all his thoughts now flowing clear,
From a clear fountain flowing, he looks round
And seeks for good; and finds the good he seeks—

Until abhorrence and contempt are things
He only knows by name! and, if he hear,
From other mouths, the language which they speak,
He is compassionate; and has no thought,
No feeling, which can overcome his love."

* * *

1795-1814 **1814**

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

From DESCRIPTIVE SKETCHES

[The *Descriptive Sketches*, selections from which are here given, form a little volume published in London, 1793. Though partly didactic, the lines are mostly descriptive of the scenes Wordsworth met upon his walking tour through France and Switzerland to Italy in the summer of 1790. The selections are here printed to show his strong bent toward nature five years before the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared, and also to show, mingled with this, a conventionality of thought, feeling, and phrase in keeping with the tastes of the day. In their tasteless personification, hollow rhetoric, "poetic diction," and far-fetched figures and epithets, they illustrate the worst faults of the second-rate poetry of the decade.

The version of the poem here given is that of 1793, somewhat modified in punctuation and capitalization. Wordsworth afterwards altered it greatly. Notes below followed by the letter *W* are by Wordsworth.]

Were there, below, a spot of holy ground,
By Pain and her sad family unfound,
Sure, Nature's God that spot to man had given,
Where murmuring rivers join the song of even;
Where falls the purple morning far and wide
In flakes of light upon the mountain-side;
Where summer suns in ocean sink to rest,
Or moonlight upland lifts her hoary breast;
Where Silence, on her night of wing, o'erbroods
Unfathomed dells and undiscovered woods;
Where rocks and groves the power of waters shakes
In cataracts, or sleeps in quiet lakes.
But doubly pitying Nature loves to shower
Soft on his wounded heart her healing power,
Who plods o'er hills and vales his road forlorn,
Wooing her varying charms from eve to morn.

No sad vacuities his heart annoy,
Blows not a zephyr but it whispers joy;
For him lost flowers their idle sweets exhale;
He tastes the meanest note that swells the gale;
For him sod-seats the cottage-door adorn,
And peeps the far-off spire, his evening bourn!
Dear is the forest frowning o'er his head,
And dear the greensward to his velvet tread;
Moves there a cloud o'er midday's flaming eye?
Upward he looks—and calls it luxury;
Kind Nature's charities his steps attend,
In every babbling brook he finds a friend,
While chastening thoughts of sweetest use, bestowed
By wisdom, moralize his pensive road.
Host of his welcome inn, the noontide bower,
To his spare meal he calls the passing poor;
He views the sun uprear his golden fire,
Or sink, with heart alive like Memnon's lyre;
Blesses the moon that comes with kindest ray
To light him shaken by his viewless way.
With bashful fear no cottage children steal
From him, a brother at the cottage meal,
His humble looks no shy restraint impart,
Around him plays at will the virgin heart.
While unsuspended wheels the village dance,
The maidens eye him with inquiring glance,
Much wondering what sad stroke of crazing care
Or desperate love could lead a wanderer there.
Me, lured by hope her sorrows to remove,
A heart, that could not much itself approve,
O'er Gallia's wastes of corn dejected led,
Her road elms rustling thin above my head,
Or through her truant pathway's native charms,
By secret villages and lonely farms,
To where the Alps, ascending white in air,
Toy with the sun, and glitter from afar.

34. *Memnon's lyre.* The lyre of Memnon is reported to have emitted melancholy or cheerful tones as it was touched by the sun's evening or morning rays. (*W.*)

48. *Her road elms.* There are few people whom it may be necessary to inform that the sides of many of the post-roads in France are planted with a row of trees. (*W.*)

Even now I sigh at hoary Chartreuse' doom,
Weeping beneath his chill of mountain gloom
Where now is fled that Power whose frown severe
Tamed "sober Reason" till she crouched in fear?
That breathed a death-like peace these woods around,
Broke only by the unvaried torrent's sound,
Or prayer-bell by the dull cicada drowned.
The cloister startles at the gleam of arms,
And blasphemy the shuddering fane alarms;
Nod the cloud-piercing pines their troubled heads,
Spires, rocks, and lawns a browner night o'erspreads.
Strong terror checks the female peasant's sighs,
And start the astonished shades at female eyes.
The thundering tube the aged angler hears,
And swells the groaning torrent with his tears.
From Bruno's forest screams the frighted jay,
And slow the insulted eagle wheels away.
The cross with hideous laughter demons mock,
By angels planted on the aërial rock.
The "parting Genius" sighs with hollow breath
Along the mystic streams of Life and Death,
Swelling the outcry dull, that long resounds
Portentous, through her old woods' trackless bounds,
Deepening her echoing torrents' awful peal
And bidding paler shades her form conceal,
Vallombre, 'mid her falling fanes, deplores,
Forever broke, the sabbath of her bowers.
More pleased, my foot the hidden margin roves
Of Como bosomed deep in chestnut groves.

53. *Chartreuse.* La Grande Chartreuse, founded by St. Bruno in 1084, is a famous monastery of the Carthusians north of Grenoble in the Alps. When Wordsworth reached the place it was being visited by a detachment of soldiery on some governmental errand. Not understanding French very well, he supposed that he was witnessing the expulsion of the monastic order from its ancient seat by military force. Such was not the case, though the expulsion took place about a year later.

71. *By angels,* etc. Alluding to crosses seen on the tops of the spiry rocks of the Chartreuse, which have every appearance of being inaccessible. (*W.*)

72. *parting Genius.* "Compare Milton's 'Ode on the Nativity,' xx."—Professor Knight's note.

73. *Life and Death,* names of rivers at the Chartreuse. (*W.*)

78. *Vallombre.* Name of one of the valleys of the Chartreuse. (*W.*)

81. *Como,* Lake Como, northern Italy.

No meadows thrown between, the giddy steeps
Tower, bare or silvan, from the narrow deeps.
To towns, whose shades of no rude sound complain,
To ringing team unknown and grating wain,
To flat-roofed towns, that touch the water's bound,
Or lurk in woody sunless glens profound,
Or from the bending rocks obtrusive cling,
And o'er the whitened wave their shadows fling;
Wild round the steeps the little pathway twines,
And Silence loves its purple roof of vines.
The viewless lingerer hence, at evening, sees
From rock-hewn steps the sail between the trees;
Or marks, 'mid opening cliffs, fair dark-eyed maids
Tend the small harvest of their garden glades,
Or, led by distant warbling notes, surveys,
With hollow ringing ears and darkening gaze,
Binding the charméd soul in powerless trance,
Lip-dewing song and ringlet-tossing dance,
Where sparkling eyes and breaking smiles illume
The bosomed cabin's lyre-enlivened gloom;
Or stops the solemn mountain-shades to view
Stretch, o'er their pictured mirror, broad and blue,
Tracking the yellow sun from steep to steep,
As up the opposing hills, with tortoise foot, they creep.
Here half a village shines, in gold arrayed,
Bright as the moon, half hides itself in shade.
From the dark silvan roofs the restless spire,
Inconstant glancing, mounts like springing fire,
There, all unshaded, blazing forests throw
Rich golden verdure on the waves below.
Slow glides the sail along the illumined shore,
And steals into the shade the lazy oar.
Soft bosoms breathe around contagious sighs,
And amorous music on the water dies.
Heedless how Pliny, musing here, surveyed
Old Roman boats and figures through the shade,
Pale Passion, overpowered, retires and woos

90. *the little pathway.* If any of my readers should ever visit the Lake of Como, I recommend it to him to take a stroll along this charming little pathway; he must choose the evening, as it is on the western side of the lake. We pursued it from the foot of the water to its head; it is once interrupted by a ferry. (*W.*)

116. *Pliny.* Pliny the Younger was born at Como about 61 A.D.

The thicket, where the unlistened stock-dove coos.
How blest, delicious scene! the eye that greets
Thy open beauties, or thy lone retreats;
The unwearied sweep of wood thy cliffs that scales,
The never-ending waters of thy vales;
The cots, those dim religious groves embower,
Or, under rocks that from the water tower
Insinuated, sprinkling all the shore,
Each with his household boat beside the door,
Whose flaccid sails in forms fantastic droop,
Brightening the gloom where thick the forests stoop;
—Thy torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
Thy towns, like swallows' nests that cleave on high;
That glimmer hoar in eve's last light descried
Dim from the twilight water's shaggy side,
Whence lutes and voices down the enchanted woods
Steal, and compose the oar-forgotten floods,
While Evening's solemn bird melodious weeps,
Heard, by star-spotted bays, beneath the steeps;
—Thy lake, mid smoking woods, that blue and gray
Gleams, streaked or dappled, hid from morning's ray
Slow-traveling down the western hills, to fold
Its green-tinged margin in a blaze of gold;
From thickly-glittering spires the matin-bell
Calling the woodman from his desert cell,
A summons to the sound of oars, that pass,
Spotting the steaming deeps, to early Mass;
Slow swells the service o'er the water borne,
While fill each pause the ringing woods of morn.
Farewell! those forms that, in thy noontide shade,
Rest, near their little plots of wheaten glade;
Those steadfast eyes, that beating breasts inspire
To throw the "sultry ray" of young desire;
Those lips, whose tides of fragrance come, and go,
Accordant to the cheek's unquiet glow;
Those shadowy breasts in love's soft light arrayed,
And rising, by the moon of passion swayed.

[The scene here shifts to the high Alps]

But now with other soul I stand alone
Sublime upon this far-surveying cone,

And watch from pike to pike amid the sky
Small as a bird the chamois-chaser fly.
'Tis his with fearless step at large to roam
Through wastes, of spirits winged the solemn home,
Through vacant worlds where Nature never gave
A brook to murmur or a bough to wave,
Which unsubstantial phantoms sacred keep;
Through worlds where Life, and Sound, and Motion sleep,
Where Silence still her death-like reign extends,
Save when the startling cliff unfrequent rends;
In the deep snow the mighty ruin drowned,
Mocks the dull ear of Time with deaf abortive sound;
—To mark a planet's pomp and steady light
In the least star of scarce-appearing night,
And neighboring moon, that coasts the vast profound,
Wheel pale and silent her diminished round,
While far and wide the icy summits blaze,
Rejoicing in the glory of her rays;
The star of noon that glitters small and bright,
Shorn of his beams, insufferably white,
And flying fleet behind his orb to view
The interminable sea of sable blue.
—Of cloudless suns no more ye frost-built spires
Refract in rainbow hues the restless fires!
Ye dewy mists the arid rocks o'erspread
Whose slippery face derides his deathful tread!
—To wet the peak's impracticable sides
He opens of his feet the sanguine tides,
Weak and more weak the issuing current eyes
Lapped by the panting tongue of thirsty skies.
—At once bewildering mists around him close,
And cold and hunger are his least of woes;

368. *pike.* "Pike" is a word very commonly used in the north of England to signify a high mountain of the conic form, as Langdale Pike, etc. (*W.*)

372 ff. For most of the images in the next sixteen verses I am indebted to M. Raymond's interesting observations annexed to his translation of Coxe's *Tour in Switzerland.* (*W.*)

397. *thirsty skies.* The rays of the sun drying the rocks frequently produce on their surface a dust so subtile and slippery that the wretched chamois-chasers are obliged to bleed themselves in the legs and feet in order to secure a footing. (*W.*)

The Demon of the snow with angry roar
Descending, shuts for aye his prison door.
Crazed by the strength of hope at morn he eyes
As sent from heaven the raven of the skies,
Then with despair's whole weight his spirits sink,
No bread to feed him, and the snow his drink,
While ere his eyes can close upon the day,
The eagle of the Alps o'ershades his prey.
—Meanwhile his wife and child with cruel hope
All night the door at every moment ope;
Haply that child in fearful doubt may gaze,
Passing his father's bones in future days,
Start at the relics of that very thigh,
On which so oft he prattled when a boy.

[The poem closes with this return of the scene to France. Though England and France were at war when the poem was published, it is significant that Wordsworth ends with an expression of radical social ideas.]

—And thou! fair favored region! which my soul
Shall love, 'till Life has broke her golden bowl,
Till Death's cold touch her cistern-wheel assail,
And vain regret and vain desire shall fail;
Though now, where erst the gray-clad peasant strayed,
To break the quiet of the village shade
Gleam war's discordant habits through the trees,
And the red banner mock the sullen breeze;
'Though now no more thy maids their voices suit
To the low-warbled breath of twilight lute,
And heard, the pausing village hum between,
No solemn songstress lull the fading green,
Scared by the fife, and rumbling drum's alarms,
And the short thunder, and the flash of arms;
While, as Night bids the startling uproar die,
Sole sound, the sourd renews his mournful cry.

741-742. See *Ecclesiastes* xii, 6.
745-746. This, as may be supposed, was written before France became the seat of war. (*W.*)
755. *sourd*, an insect so called, which emits a short, melancholy cry, heard, at the close of summer evenings, on the banks of the Loire. (*W.*)

—Yet, hast thou found that Freedom spreads her power
Beyond the cottage hearth, the cottage door.
All Nature smiles; and owns beneath her eyes
Her fields peculiar, and peculiar skies.
Yes, as I roamed where Loiret's waters glide
Through rustling aspens heard from side to side,
When from October clouds a milder light
Fell, where the blue flood rippled into white,
Methought from every cot the watchful bird
Crowed with ear-piercing power 'till then unheard;
Each clacking mill, that broke the murmuring streams,
Rocked the charmed thought in more delightful dreams,
Chasing those long, long dreams the falling leaf
Awoke a fainter pang of moral grief;
The measured echo of the distant flail
Winded in sweeter cadence down the vale;
A more majestic tide the water rolled
And glowed the sun-gilt groves in richer gold;
—Though Liberty shall soon, indignant, raise
Red on his hills his beacon's comet blaze;
Bid from on high his lonely cannon sound,
And on ten thousand hearths his shout rebound;
His larum-bell from village-tower to tower
Swing on the astounded ear its dull undying roar:
Yet, yet rejoice, though Pride's perverted ire
Rouse Hell's own aid, and wrap thy hills in fire.
Lo! from the innocuous flames, a lovely birth!
With its own virtues springs another earth;
Nature, as in her prime, her virgin reign
Begins, and Love and Truth compose her train;
With pulseless hand, and fixed unwearied gaze,
Unbreathing Justice her still beam surveys;
No more, along thy vales and viny groves,
Whole hamlets disappearing as he moves,
With cheeks o'erspread by smiles of baleful glow,
On his pale horse shall fell Consumption go.
Oh, give, great God, to Freedom's waves to ride
Sublime o'er Conquest, Avarice, and Pride,

760. *Loiret,* the Loirette, a beautiful stream near Orleans.
774. From this point on, the lines were omitted or greatly altered in subsequent editions.

To break, the vales where Death with Famine scowers,
And dark Oppression builds her thick-ribbed towers;
Where Machination her fell soul resigns,
Fled panting to the center of her mines;
Where Persecution decks with ghastly smiles
Her bed; his mountains mad Ambition piles;
Where Discord stalks dilating, every hour,
And crouching fearful at the feet of Power,
Like Lightnings eager for the almighty word,
Look up for sign of havoc, fire, and sword,
—Give them, beneath their breast while Gladness springs,
To brood the nations o'er with Nile-like wings;
And grant that every sceptered child of clay,
Who cries, presumptuous, "Here their tides shall stay,"
Swept in their anger from the affrighted shore,
With all his creatures sink—to rise no more.
Tonight, my friend, within this humble cot
Be the dead load of mortal ills forgot,
Renewing, when the rosy summits glow
At morn, our various journey, sad and slow.

1792-1793 **1793**

THE IDIOT BOY

'Tis eight o'clock—a clear March night;
The moon is up; the sky is blue,
The owlet, in the moonlight air,
Shouts from nobody knows where;
He lengthens out his lonely shout,
Halloo! halloo! a long halloo!

—Why bustle thus about your door,
What means this bustle, Betty Foy?
Why are you in this mighty fret?
And why on horseback have you set
Him whom you love, your idiot boy?

Scarcely a soul is out of bed;
Good Betty, put him down again;

His lips with joy they burr at you;
But, Betty! what has he to do
With stirrup, saddle, or with rein?

But Betty's bent on her intent;
For her good neighbor, Susan Gale,
Old Susan, she who dwells alone,
Is sick, and makes a piteous moan,
As if her very life would fail.

There's not a house within a mile,
No hand to help them in distress;
Old Susan lies abed in pain,
And sorely puzzled are the twain,
For what she ails they cannot guess.

And Betty's husband's at the wood,
Where by the week he doth abide,
A woodman in the distant vale;
There's none to help poor Susan Gale;
What must be done? What will betide?

And Betty from the lane has fetched
Her pony, that is mild and good;
Whether he be in joy or pain,
Feeding at will along the lane,
Or bringing fagots from the wood.

And he is all in traveling trim—
And, by the moonlight, Betty Foy
Has on the well-girt saddle set
(The like was never heard of yet)
Him whom she loves, her idiot boy.

And he must post without delay
Across the bridge and through the dale,
And by the church, and o'er the down,
To bring a doctor from the town,
Or she will die, old Susan Gale.

There is no need of boot or spur,
There is no need of whip or wand;
For Johnny has his holly-bough,
And with a *hurly-burly* now
He shakes the green bough in his hand.

And Betty o'er and o'er has told
The boy, who is her best delight,
Both what to follow, what to shun,
What do, and what to leave undone,
How turn to left, and how to right.

And Betty's most especial charge,
Was, "Johnny! Johnny! mind that you
Come home again, nor stop at all—
Come home again, whate'er befall,
My Johnny, do, I pray you, do."

To this did Johnny answer make,
Both with his head and with his hand,
And proudly shook the bridle, too;
And then! his words were not a few,
Which Betty well could understand.

And now that Johnny is just going,
Though Betty's in a mighty flurry,
She gently pats the pony's side,
On which her idiot boy must ride,
And seems no longer in a hurry.

But when the pony moved his legs,
Oh! then for the poor idiot boy!
For joy he cannot hold the bridle,
For joy his head and heels are idle,
He's idle all for very joy.

And, while the pony moves his legs,
In Johnny's left hand you may see
The green bough motionless and dead;
The moon that shines above his head
Is not more still and mute than he.

His heart, it was so full of glee
That, till full fifty yards were gone,
He quite forgot his holly whip,
And all his skill in horsemanship—
Oh! happy, happy, happy John.

And while the mother, at the door,
Stands fixed, her face with joy o'erflows,
Proud of herself, and proud of him,
She sees him in his traveling trim,
How quietly her Johnny goes.

The silence of her idiot boy,
What hopes it sends to Betty's heart!
He's at the guidepost—he turns right;
She watches till he's out of sight,
And Betty will not then depart.

Burr, burr—now Johnny's lips they burr,
As loud as any mill, or near it;
Meek as a lamb the pony moves,
And Johnny makes the noise he loves,
And Betty listens, glad to hear it.

Away she hies to Susan Gale;
Her messenger's in merry tune;
The owlets hoot, the owlets curr,
And Johnny's lips they burr, burr, burr,
As on he goes beneath the moon.

His steed and he right well agree;
For of this pony there's a rumor
That, should he lose his eyes and ears,
And should he live a thousand years,
He never will be out of humor.

But then he is a horse that thinks!
And, when he thinks, his pace is slack;
Now, though he knows poor Johnny well,
Yet, for his life, he cannot tell
What he has got upon his back.

So through the moonlight lanes they go,
And far into the moonlight dale,
And by the church, and o'er the down,
To bring a doctor from the town,
To comfort poor old Susan Gale.

And Betty, now at Susan's side,
Is in the middle of her story,
What speedy help her boy will bring,
With many a most diverting thing,
Of Johnny's wit and Johnny's glory.

And Betty, still at Susan's side,
By this time is not quite so flurried;
Demure with porringer and plate
She sits, as if in Susan's fate
Her life and soul were buried.

But Betty, poor, good woman! she—
You plainly in her face may read it—
Could lend out of that moment's store
Five years of happiness or more
To any that might need it.

But yet I guess that now and then
With Betty all was not so well;
And to the road she turns her ears,
And thence full many a sound she hears,
Which she to Susan will not tell.

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans;
"As sure as there's a moon in heaven,"
Cries Betty, "he'll be back again;
They'll both be here—'tis almost ten—
Both will be here before eleven."

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans;
The clock gives warning for eleven;
'Tis on the stroke—"He must be near,"
Quoth Betty, "and will soon be here,
As sure as there's a moon in heaven."

The clock is on the stroke of twelve,
And Johnny is not yet in sight.
The moon's in heaven, as Betty sees,
But Betty is not quite at ease;
And Susan has a dreadful night.

And Betty, half an hour ago,
On Johnny vile reflections cast:
"A little, idle, sauntering thing!"
With other names, an endless string;
But now that time is gone and past.

And Betty's drooping at the heart,
That happy time all past and gone,
"How can it be he is so late?
The doctor, he has made him wait;
Susan! they'll both be here anon."

And Susan's growing worse and worse,
And Betty's in a sad *quandary;*
And then there's nobody to say
If she must go, or she must stay!
—She's in a sad *quandary.*

The clock is on the stroke of one;
But neither doctor nor his guide
Appears along the moonlight road;
There's neither horse nor man abroad,
And Betty's still at Susan's side.

And Susan now begins to fear
Of sad mischances not a few,
That Johnny may perhaps be drowned,
Or lost, perhaps, and never found;
Which they must both forever rue.

She prefaced half a hint of this
With, "God forbid it should be true!"
At the first word that Susan said
Cried Betty, rising from the bed,
"Susan, I'd gladly stay with you.

"I must be gone, I must away,
Consider, Johnny's but half-wise;
Susan, we must take care of him,
If he is hurt in life or limb"—
"Oh, God forbid!" poor Susan cries.

"What can I do?" says Betty, going,
"What can I do to ease your pain?
Good Susan tell me, and I'll stay;
I fear you're in a dreadful way,
But I shall soon be back again."

"Nay, Betty, go! good Betty, go!
There's nothing that can ease my pain."
Then off she hies; but with a prayer,
That God poor Susan's life would spare,
Till she comes back again.

So through the moonlight lane she goes,
And far into the moonlight dale;
And how she ran, and how she walked,
And all that to herself she talked,
Would surely be a tedious tale.

In high and low, above, below,
In great and small, in round and square.
In tree and tower was Johnny seen,
In bush and brake, in black and green;
'Twas Johnny, Johnny, everywhere.

And while she crossed the bridge, there came
A thought with which her heart is sore—
Johnny perhaps his horse forsook,
To hunt the moon within the brook,
And never will be heard of more.

Now is she high upon the down,
Alone amid a prospect wide;
There's neither Johnny nor his horse
Among the fern or in the gorse;
There's neither doctor nor his guide.

"Oh saints! what is become of him?
Perhaps he's climbed into an oak,
Where he will stay till he is dead;
Or sadly he has been misled,
And joined the wandering gypsy-folk.

"Or him that wicked pony's carried
To the dark cave, the goblin's hall;
Or in the castle he's pursuing
Among the ghosts his own undoing;
Or playing with the waterfall."

At poor old Susan then she railed,
While to the town she posts away;
"If Susan had not been so ill,
Alas! I should have had him still,
My Johnny, till my dying day."

Poor Betty, in this sad distemper,
The doctor's self could hardly spare.
Unworthy things she talked, and wild.
Even he, of cattle the most mild,
The pony had his share.

But now she's fairly in the town,
And to the doctor's door she hies;
'Tis silence all on every side;
The town so long, the town so wide,
Is silent as the skies.

And now she's at the doctor's door,
She lifts the knocker, rap, rap, rap;
The doctor at the casement shows
His glimmering eyes that peep and doze!
And one hand rubs his old nightcap.

"Oh, Doctor! Doctor! where's my Johnny?"
"I'm here, what is't you want with me?"
"Oh, sir! you know I'm Betty Foy,
And I have lost my poor, dear boy,
You know him—him you often see;

"He's not so wise as some folks be——"
"The devil take his wisdom!" said
The doctor, looking somewhat grim,
"What, woman! should I know of him?"
And, grumbling, he went back to bed!

"O woe is me! O woe is me!
Here will I die; here will I die;
I thought to find my lost one here,
But he is neither far nor near,
Oh! what a wretched mother I!"

She stops, she stands, she looks about;
Which way to turn she cannot tell.
Poor Betty! it would ease her pain
If she had heart to knock again;
—The clock strikes three—a dismal knell!

Then up along the town she hies,
No wonder if her senses fail;
This piteous news so much it shocked her,
She quite forgot to send the doctor,
To comfort poor old Susan Gale.

And now she's high upon the down,
And she can see a mile of road.
"O cruel! I'm almost threescore;
Such night as this was ne'er before,
There's not a single soul abroad."

She listens, but she cannot hear
The foot of horse, the voice of man;
The streams with softest sound are flowing,
The grass you almost hear it growing,
You hear it now, if e'er you can.

The owlets through the long blue night
Are shouting to each other still.
Fond lovers! yet not quite hobnob,
They lengthen out the tremulous sob,
That echoes far from hill to hill.

Poor Betty now has lost all hope,
Her thoughts are bent on deadly sin,
A green-grown pond she just has passed,
And from the brink she hurries fast,
Lest she should drown herself therein.

And now she sits her down and weeps;
Such tears she never shed before;
"Oh, dear, dear pony! my sweet joy!
Oh, carry back my idiot boy!
And we will ne'er o'erload thee more."

A thought is come into her head:
The pony he is mild and good,
And we have always used him well;
Perhaps he's gone along the dell,
And carried Johnny to the wood.

Then up she springs as if on wings;
She thinks no more of deadly sin;
If Betty fifty ponds should see,
The last of all her thoughts would be
To drown herself therein.

Oh, reader! now that I might tell
What Johnny and his horse are doing!
What they've been doing all this time,
Oh, could I put it into rime,
A most delightful tale pursuing!

Perhaps, and no unlikely thought!
He with his pony now doth roam
The cliffs and peaks so high that are,
To lay his hands upon a star,
And in his pocket bring it home.

Perhaps he's turned himself about,
His face unto his horse's tail,
And, still and mute, in wonder lost,
All silent as a horseman-ghost,
He travels slowly down the vale.

And now, perhaps, is hunting sheep,
A fierce and dreadful hunter he;
Yon valley, now so trim and green,
In five months' time, should he be seen,
A desert wilderness will be!

Perhaps, with head and heels on fire,
And like the very soul of evil,
He's galloping away, away,
And so will gallop on for aye,
The bane of all that dread the devil!

I to the Muses have been bound
These fourteen years, by strong indentures;
O gentle Muses! let me tell
But half of what to him befell;
He surely met with strange adventures.

O gentle Muses! is this kind?
Why will ye thus my suit repel?
Why of your further aid bereave me?
And can ye thus unfriended leave me;
Ye Muses! whom I love so well?

Who's yon, that, near the waterfall,
Which thunders down with headlong force,
Beneath the moon, yet shining fair,
As careless as if nothing were,
Sits upright on a feeding horse?

Unto his horse—there feeding free,
He seems, I think, the rein to give;
Of moon or stars he takes no heed;
Of such we in romances read.
—'Tis Johnny! Johnny! as I live.

And that's the very pony, too!
Where is she, where is Betty Foy?
She hardly can sustain her fears;
The roaring waterfall she hears,
And cannot find her idiot boy.

Your pony's worth his weight in gold;
Then calm your terrors, Betty Foy!
She's coming from among the trees,
And now all full in view she sees
Him whom she loves, her idiot boy.

And Betty sees the pony, too:
Why stand you thus, good Betty Foy?
It is no goblin, 'tis no ghost,
'Tis he whom you so long have lost,
He whom you love, your idiot boy.

She looks again—her arms are up—
She screams—she cannot move for joy;
She darts, as with a torrent's force,
She almost has o'erturned the horse,
And fast she holds her idiot boy.

And Johnny burrs, and laughs aloud;
Whether in cunning or in joy
I cannot tell; but, while he laughs,
Betty a drunken pleasure quaffs
To hear again her idiot boy.

And now she's at the pony's tail,
And now is at the pony's head—
On that side now, and now on this;
And, almost stifled with her bliss,
A few sad tears does Betty shed.

She kisses o'er and o'er again
Him whom she loves, her idiot boy;
She's happy here, is happy there,
She is uneasy everywhere;
Her limbs are all alive with joy.

She pats the pony, where or when
She knows not, happy Betty Foy!
The little pony glad may be,
But he is milder far than she;
You hardly can perceive his joy.

"Oh! Johnny, never mind the doctor;
You've done your best, and that is all."
She took the reins, when this was said,
And gently turned the pony's head
From the loud waterfall.

By this the stars were almost gone,
The moon was setting on the hill,
So pale you scarcely looked at her.
The little birds began to stir,
Though yet their tongues were still.

The pony, Betty, and her boy,
Wind slowly through the woody dale;
And who is she, betimes abroad,
That hobbles up the steep rough road?
Who is it, but old Susan Gale?

Long time lay Susan lost in thought;
And many dreadful fears beset her,
Both for her messenger and nurse;
And, as her mind grew worse and worse,
Her body—it grew better.

She turned, she tossed herself in bed,
On all sides doubts and terrors met her;
Point after point did she discuss;
And, while her mind was fighting thus,
Her body still grew better.

"Alas! what is become of them?
These fears can never be endured;
I'll to the wood."—The word scarce said,
Did Susan rise up from her bed,
As if by magic cured.

Away she goes up hill and down,
And to the wood at length is come;
She spies her friends, she shouts a greeting;
Oh, me! it is a merry meeting
As ever was in Christendom.

The owls have hardly sung their last,
While our four travelers homeward wend;
The owls have hooted all night long,
And with the owls began my song,
And with the owls must end.

For, while they all were traveling home,
Cried Betty, "Tell us, Johnny, do,
Where all this long night you have been,
What you have heard, what you have seen;
And, Johnny, mind you tell us true."

Now Johnny all night long had heard
The owls in tuneful concert strive;
No doubt, too, he the moon had seen;
For in the moonlight he had been
From eight o'clock till five.

And thus, to Betty's question, he
Made answer, like a traveler bold
(His very words I give to you),
"The cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo,
And the sun did shine so cold!"
—Thus answered Johnny in his glory,
And that was all his travel's story.

1798 1798

ALICE FELL

OR POVERTY

[This poem was written at the urgency of one of Wordsworth's friends who had been one of the gentlemen in the chaise. It brought the author much ridicule, because, as he himself said, of the "meanness" of the subject.]

The postboy drove with fierce career,
For threatening clouds the moon had drowned;
When, as we hurried on, my ear
Was smitten with a startling sound.

As if the wind blew many ways,
I heard the sound—and more and more;
It seemed to follow with the chaise,
And still I heard it as before.

At length I to the boy called out;
He stopped his horses at the word,
But neither cry, nor voice, nor shout,
Nor aught else like it, could be heard.

The boy then smacked his whip, and fast
The horses scampered through the rain;
But, hearing soon upon the blast
The cry, I bade him halt again.

Forthwith alighting on the ground,
"Whence comes," said I, "this piteous moan?"
And there a little girl I found,
Sitting behind the chaise, alone.

"My cloak!" no other word she spake,
But loud and bitterly she wept,
As if her innocent heart would break;
And down from off her seat she leapt.

"What ails you, child?"—she sobbed, "Look here!"
I saw it in the wheel entangled,
A weather-beaten rag as e'er
From any garden scarecrow dangled.

There, twisted between nave and spoke,
It hung, nor could at once be freed;
But our joint pains unloosed the cloak,
A miserable rag indeed!

"And whither are you going, child,
Tonight along these lonesome ways?"
"To Durham," answered she, half wild—
"Then come with me into the chaise."

Insensible to all relief
Sat the poor girl, and forth did send
Sob after sob, as if her grief
Could never, never have an end.

"My child, in Durham do you dwell?"
She checked herself in her distress,

And said, "My name is Alice Fell;
I'm fatherless and motherless.

"And I to Durham, sir, belong."
Again, as if the thought would choke
Her very heart, her grief grew strong;
And all was for her tattered cloak!

The chaise drove on; our journey's end
Was nigh; and, sitting by my side,
As if she had lost her only friend
She wept, nor would be pacified.

Up to the tavern door we post;
Of Alice and her grief I told;
And I gave money to the host,
To buy a new cloak for the old.

"And let it be of duffel gray,
As warm a cloak as man can sell!"
Proud creature was she the next day,
The little orphan Alice Fell!

1802 1807

From PETER BELL

[Peter is a vagabond felon, quite untouched by any influences in nature amid which he spends his life. Here Wordsworth is describing Peter Bell to a group of people in his garden.]

"He, two-and-thirty years or more,
Had been a wild and woodland rover;
Had heard the Atlantic surges roar
On farthest Cornwall's rocky shore,
And trod the cliffs of Dover.

* * *

"And all along the indented coast,
Bespattered with the salt-sea foam;
Where'er a knot of houses lay

On headland, or in hollow bay—
Sure never man like him did roam!

"As well might Peter in the Fleet
Have been fast bound, a begging debtor;
He traveled here, he traveled there—
But not the value of a hair
Was heart or head the better.

"He roved among the vales and streams,
In the green wood and hollow dell;
They were his dwellings night and day—
But Nature ne'er could find the way
Into the heart of Peter Bell.

"In vain, through every changeful year,
Did Nature lead him as before;
A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

"Small change it made in Peter's heart
To see his gentle panniered train
With more than vernal pleasure feeding,
Where'er the tender grass was leading
Its earliest green along the lane.

"In vain, through water, earth, and air,
The soul of happy sound was spread,
When Peter on some April morn,
Beneath the broom or budding thorn,
Made the warm earth his lazy bed.

"At noon, when, by the forest's edge
He lay beneath the branches high,
The soft blue sky did never melt
Into his heart; he never felt
The witchery of the soft blue sky!

"On a fair prospect some have looked
And felt, as I have heard them say,
As if the moving time had been

A thing as steadfast as the scene
On which they gazed themselves away.

"Within the breast of Peter Bell
These silent raptures found no place;
He was a carl as wild and rude
As ever hue-and-cry pursued,
As ever ran a felon's race."

[One night, however, Peter loses his way, and in the moonlight comes upon an ass standing at the brink of a stream. He at once plans to steal the animal and ride it away.]

Beneath the clear blue sky he saw
A little field of meadow ground;
But field or meadow name it not;
Call it of earth a small green plot,
With rocks encompassed round.

The Swale flowed under the gray rocks,
But he flowed quiet and unseen—
You need a strong and stormy gale
To bring the noises of the Swale
To that green spot, so calm and green!

And is there no one dwelling here,
No hermit with his beads and glass?
And does no little cottage look
Upon this soft and fertile nook?
Does no one live near this green grass?

Across the deep and quiet spot
Is Peter driving through the grass—
And now has reached the skirting trees;
When, turning round his head, he sees
A solitary ass.

"A prize!" cries Peter—but he first
Must spy about him far and near:
There's not a single house in sight,
No woodman's hut, no cottage light—
Peter, you need not fear!

There's nothing to be seen but woods,
And rocks that spread a hoary gleam,
And this one beast, that from the bed
Of the green meadow hangs his head
Over the silent stream.

His head is with a halter bound;
The halter seizing, Peter leapt
Upon the creature's back, and plied
With ready heels his shaggy side;
But still the ass his station kept.

Then Peter gave a sudden jerk,
A jerk that from a dungeon floor
Would have pulled up an iron ring;
But still the heavy-headed thing
Stood just as he had stood before!

Quoth Peter, leaping from his seat,
"There is some plot against me laid";
Once more the little meadow ground
And all the hoary cliffs around
He cautiously surveyed.

All, all is silent—rocks and woods,
All still and silent—far and near!
Only the ass, with motion dull,
Upon the pivot of his skull
Turns round his long left ear.

•

Thought Peter, "What can mean all this?
Some ugly witchcraft must be here!"
—Once more the ass, with motion dull,
Upon the pivot of his skull
Turned round his long left ear.

Suspicion ripened into dread;
Yet, with deliberate action slow,
His staff high-raising, in the pride
Of skill, upon the sounding hide
He dealt a sturdy blow.

The poor ass staggered with the shock;
And then, as if to take his ease,
In quiet, uncomplaining mood,
Upon the spot where he had stood,
Dropped gently down upon his knees;

As gently on his side he fell,
And by the river's brink did lie;
And, while he lay like one that mourned,
The patient beast on Peter turned
His shining hazel eye.

'Twas but one mild, reproachful look,
A look more tender than severe;
And straight in sorrow, not in dread,
He turned the eyeball in his head
Toward the smooth river deep and clear.

[At length the robber, horror-struck, sees the body of the faithful beast's master in the stream and drags it to the bank. Then the animal carries him to the home of the dead man. The sights of sorrow and Peter's contrition at his cruelty fill the remaining stanzas.]

—Here ends my tale; for in a trice
Arrived a neighbor with his horse;
Peter went forth with him straightway;
And, with due care, ere break of day,
Together they brought back the corse.

And many years did this poor ass,
Whom once it was my luck to see
Cropping the shrubs of Leming Lane,
Help by his labor to maintain
The widow and her family.

And Peter Bell, who, till that night,
Had been the wildest of his clan,
Forsook his crimes, renounced his folly,
And, after ten months' melancholy,
Became a good and honest man.

1798 1819

APPENDIX B

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION OF SEVERAL OF THE FOREGOING POEMS, PUBLISHED, WITH AN ADDITIONAL VOLUME, UNDER THE TITLE OF "LYRICAL BALLADS."

The first volume of these poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a poet may rationally endeavor to impart.

I had formed no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of those poems: I flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure; and, on the other hand, I was well aware, that by those who should dislike them, they would be read with more than common dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that a greater number have been pleased than I ventured to hope I should please.

Several of my friends are anxious for the success of these poems, from a belief that, if the views with which they were composed were indeed realized, a class of poetry would be produced, well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and not unimportant in the quality and in the multiplicity of its moral relations; and on this account they have advised me to prefix a systematic defense of the theory upon which the poems were written. But I was unwilling to undertake the task, knowing that on this occasion the reader would look coldly upon my arguments, since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of *reasoning* him into an approbation of these particular poems; and I was still more unwilling to undertake the task, because adequately to display the opinions, and fully to enforce the arguments, would require a space wholly disproportionate to a preface. For, to treat the subject with

the clearness and coherence of which it is susceptible, it would be necessary to give a full account of the present state of the public taste in this country, and to determine how far this taste is healthy or depraved; which, again, could not be determined without pointing out in what manner language and the human mind act and react on each other, and without retracing the revolutions, not of literature alone, but likewise of society itself. I have therefore altogether declined to enter regularly upon this defense; yet I am sensible that there would be something like impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the public, without a few words of introduction, poems so materially different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed.

It is supposed that by the act of writing in verse an author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association; that he not only thus apprises the reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded. This exponent or symbol held forth by metrical language must in different eras of literature have excited very different expectations: for example, in the age of Catullus, Terence, and Lucretius, and that of Statius or Claudian; and in our own country, in the age of Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher, and that of Donne and Cowley, or Dryden, or Pope. I will not take upon me to determine the exact import of the promise which, by the act of writing in verse, an author in the present day makes to his reader; but it will undoubtedly appear to many persons that I have not fulfilled the terms of an engagement thus voluntarily contracted. They who have been accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will, no doubt, frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness; they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. I hope, therefore, the reader will not censure me for attempting to state what I have proposed to myself to perform, and also (as far as the limits of a preface will permit) to explain some of the chief reasons which have determined me in the choice of my purpose: that at least he may be spared any unpleasant feeling of disappointment, and that I myself may be protected from one of the most dishonorable accusations which can be brought against an author—namely, that of an indolence which prevents him from endeavoring to ascertain what is his

duty, or, when his duty is ascertained, prevents him from performing it.

The principal object, then, proposed in these poems, was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect, and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language, too, of these men has been adopted (purified indeed from what appears to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust), because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly, such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical, language than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets, who think that they are conferring honor upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites of their own creation.[1]

1. "It is worth while here to observe that the affecting parts of Chaucer are almost always expressed in language pure and universally intelligible even to this day."—Wordsworth's note.

I cannot, however, be insensible to the present outcry against the triviality and meanness, both of thought and language, which some of my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical compositions; and I acknowledge that this defect, where it exists, is more dishonorable to the writer's own character than false refinement or arbitrary innovation, though I should contend at the same time that it is far less pernicious in the sum of its consequences. From such verses the poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference—that each of them has a worthy *purpose*. Not that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived; but habits of meditation have, I trust, so prompted and regulated my feelings that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings will be found to carry along with them a *purpose*. If this opinion be erroneous, I can have little right to the name of a poet. For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; and though this be true, poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and as, by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified.

It has been said that each of these poems has a purpose. Another circumstance must be mentioned which distinguishes these poems from the popular poetry of the day; it is this: that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling.

A sense of false modesty shall not prevent me from asserting that the reader's attention is pointed to this mark of distinction, far less for the sake of these particular poems than from the general importance of the subject. The subject is indeed

important! For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know that one being is elevated above another in proportion as he possesses this capability. It has therefore appeared to me that to endeavor to produce or enlarge this capability is one of the best services in which, at any period, a writer can be engaged; but this service, excellent at all times, is especially so at the present day. For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies. To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves. The invaluable works of our elder writers (I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton) are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse.—When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation, I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble endeavor made in these volumes to counteract it; and, reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with no dishonorable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it, which are equally inherent and indestructible; and were there not added to this impression a belief that the time is approaching when the evil will be systematically opposed by men of greater powers, and with far more distinguished success.

Having dwelt thus long on the subjects and aim of these poems, I shall request the reader's permission to apprise him of a few circumstances relating to their *style*, in order, among other reasons, that he may not censure me for not having performed what I never attempted. The reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes, and are utterly rejected as an ordinary device to elevate the style

and raise it above prose. My purpose was to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language. They are, indeed, a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion, and I have made use of them as such; but have endeavored utterly to reject them as a mechanical device of style, or as a family language which writers in meter seem to lay claim to by prescription. I have wished to keep the reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him. Others who pursue a different track will interest him likewise; I do not interfere with their claim, but wish to prefer a claim of my own. There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; as much pains has been taken to avoid it as is ordinarily taken to produce it; this has been done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men; and, further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry. Without being culpably particular, I do not know how to give my reader a more exact notion of the style in which it was my wish and intention to write than by informing him that I have at all times endeavored to look steadily at my subject; consequently there is, I hope, in these poems little falsehood of description, and my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance. Something must have been gained by this practice, as it is friendly to one property of all good poetry—namely, good sense; but it has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of poets. I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still further, having abstained from the use of many expressions, in themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly repeated by bad poets, till such feelings of disgust are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to overpower.

If in a poem there should be found a series of lines, or even a single line, in which the language, though naturally arranged, and according to the strict laws of meter, does not differ from that of prose, there is a numerous class of critics who, when they stumble upon these prosaisms, as they call them, imagine that they have made a notable discovery, and exult over the poet

as over a man ignorant of his own profession. Now these men would establish a canon of criticism which the reader will conclude he must utterly reject, if he wishes to be pleased with these volumes. And it would be a most easy task to prove to him that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the meter, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose when prose is well written. The truth of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings, even of Milton himself. To illustrate the subject in a general manner, I will here adduce a short composition of Gray, who was at the head of those who, by their reasonings, have attempted to widen the space of separation betwixt prose and metrical composition, and was more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure of his own poetic diction:

> In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
> And reddening Phoebus lifts his golden fire;
> The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
> Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.
> These ears, alas! for other notes repine;
> *A different object do these eyes require;*
> *My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;*
> *And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.*
> Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
> And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;
> The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
> To warm their little loves the birds complain.
> *I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,*
> *And weep the more because I weep in vain.*

It will easily be perceived that the only part of this sonnet which is of any value is the lines printed in italics; it is equally obvious that, except in the rime, and in the use of the single word "fruitless" for "fruitlessly," which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose.

By the foregoing quotation it has been shown that the language of prose may yet be well adapted to poetry; and it was previously asserted that a large portion of the language of every good poem

can in no respect differ from that of good prose. We will go further. It may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between poetry and painting, and accordingly, we call them sisters; but where shall we find bonds of connection sufficiently strict to typify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred, and almost identical, not necessarily differing even in degree; poetry[1] sheds no tears "such as angels weep," but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both.

If it be affirmed that rime and metrical arrangement of themselves constitute a distinction which overturns what has just been said on the strict affinity of metrical language with that of prose, and paves the way for other artificial distinctions which the mind voluntarily admits, I answer that the language of such poetry as is here recommended is, as far as is possible, a selection of the language really spoken by men; that this selection, wherever it is made with true taste and feeling, will of itself form a distinction far greater than would at first be imagined, and will entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life, and, if meter be superadded thereto, I believe that a dissimilitude will be produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational mind. What other distinction would we have? Whence is it to come? And where is it to exist? Not, surely, where the poet speaks through the mouths of his characters; it cannot be necessary here, either for elevation of style, or any of its supposed ornaments, for, if the poet's subject be judiciously chosen, it will naturally, and upon fit occasion, lead him to passions, the language of which, if selected truly and judiciously, must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and alive with metaphors and figures. I forbear to speak of an

1. "I here use the word *poetry* (though against my own judgment) as opposed to the word *prose*, and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of *poetry* and *prose*, instead of the more philosophical one of *poetry* and *matter of fact*, or *science*. The only strict antithesis to *prose* is *meter;* nor is this, in truth, a *strict* antithesis, because lines and passages of meter so naturally occur in writing prose that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable."—Wordsworth's note.

incongruity which would shock the intelligent reader, should the poet interweave any foreign splendor of his own with that which the passion naturally suggests; it is sufficient to say that such addition is unnecessary. And, surely, it is more probable that those passages, which with propriety abound with metaphors and figures, will have their due effect, if, upon other occasions where the passions are of a milder character, the style also be subdued and temperate.

But, as the pleasure which I hope to give by the poems now presented to the reader must depend entirely on just notions upon this subject, and as it is in itself of high importance to our taste and moral feelings, I cannot content myself with these detached remarks. And if, in what I am about to say, it shall appear to some that my labor is unnecessary, and that I am like a man fighting a battle without enemies, such persons may be reminded that, whatever may be the language outwardly holden by men, a practical faith in the opinions which I am wishing to establish is almost unknown. If my conclusions are admitted, and carried as far as they must be carried if admitted at all, our judgments concerning the works of the greatest poets, both ancient and modern, will be far different from what they are at present, both when we praise and when we censure; and our moral feelings influencing and influenced by these judgments will, I believe, be corrected and purified.

Taking up the subject, then, upon general grounds, let me ask what is meant by the word *poet?* What is a poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him?—He is a man speaking to men—a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by

real events than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves;—whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.

But, whatever portion of this faculty we may suppose even the greatest poet to possess, there cannot be a doubt that the language which it will suggest to him must often, in liveliness and truth, fall short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual pressure of those passions, certain shadows of which the poet thus produces, or feels to be produced, in himself.

However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a poet, it is obvious that, while he describes and imitates passions, his employment is in some degree mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering. So that it will be the wish of the poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time, perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs; modifying only the language which is thus suggested to him by a consideration that he describes for a particular purpose, that of giving pleasure. Here, then, he will apply the principle of selection which has been already insisted upon. He will depend upon this for removing what would otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion; he will feel that there is no necessity to trick out or to elevate nature; and, the more industriously he applies this principle the deeper will be his faith that no words, which *his* fancy or imagination can suggest, will be to be compared with those which are the emanations of reality and truth.

But it may be said by those who do not object to the general spirit of these remarks, that, as it is impossible for the poet to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests, it is proper that he should consider himself as in the situation of a translator, who does not scruple to substitute excellencies of another kind for those which are unattainable by him, and endeavors occasionally to surpass his original, in order to make some amends for the general inferiority to which he feels that he must submit. But this would be to encourage idleness and unmanly despair.

Further, it is the language of men who speak of what they do not understand; who talk of poetry as of a matter of amusement and idle pleasure; who will converse with us as gravely about a *taste* for poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing, or Frontiniac or Sherry. Aristotle, I have been told, has said that poetry is the most philosophic of all writing; it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the biographer and historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the poet who comprehends the dignity of his art. The poet writes under one restriction only—namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the poet and the image of things; between this and the biographer and historian, there are a thousand.

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere because not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love; further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure. I would not be misunderstood; but wherever we sympathize with pain, it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure. We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone. The man of science, the chemist and mathematician, whatever difficulties and disgusts they may have had to struggle with, know and feel this. However painful may be the objects with which the anatomist's knowledge is connected, he feels that his knowledge is pleasure; and where he has

no pleasure he has no knowledge. What then does the poet? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and reacting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions, which from habit acquire the quality of intuitions; he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations, and finding everywhere objects that immediately excite in him sympathies which, from the necessities of his nature, are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment.

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them, and to these sympathies in which, without any other discipline than that of our daily life, we are fitted to take delight, the poet principally directs his attention. He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature. And thus the poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure which accompanies him through the whole course of his studies, converses with general nature, with affections akin to those which, through labor and length of time, the man of science has raised up in himself, by conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects of his studies. The knowledge both of the poet and the man of science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude; the poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science. Emphatically may it be said of the poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, that "he looks before and after." He is the rock of defense for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed, the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire

of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favorite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labors of men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the poet will sleep then no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, or mineralogist will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the being thus produced as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man. It is not, then, to be supposed that anyone who holds that sublime notion of poetry which I have attempted to convey will break in upon the sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory and accidental ornaments, and endeavor to excite admiration of himself by arts, the necessity of which must manifestly depend upon the assumed meanness of his subject.

What has been thus far said applies to poetry in general, but especially to those parts of composition where the poet speaks through the mouths of his characters; and upon this point it appears to authorize the conclusion that there are few persons of good sense who would not allow that the dramatic parts of composition are defective in proportion as they deviate from the real language of nature, and are colored by a diction of the poet's own, either peculiar to him as an individual poet or belonging simply to poets in general; to a body of men who, from the circumstance of their compositions being in meter, it is expected will employ a particular language.

It is not, then, in the dramatic parts of composition that we

look for this distinction of language; but still it may be proper and necessary where the poet speaks to us in his own person and character. To this I answer by referring the reader to the description before given of a poet. Among the qualities there enumerated as principally conducing to form a poet, is implied nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in degree. The sum of what was said is that the poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men. And with what are they connected? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the operations of the elements, and the appearances of the visible universe; with storm and sunshine, with the revolutions of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow. These, and the like, are the sensations and objects which the poet describes, as they are the sensations of other men, and the objects which interest them. The poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions. How, then, can his language differ in any material degree from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly? It might be *proved* that it is impossible. But supposing that this were not the case, the poet might then be allowed to use a peculiar language when expressing his feelings for his own gratification, or that of men like himself. But poets do not write for poets alone, but for men. Unless, therefore, we are advocates for that admiration which subsists upon ignorance, and that pleasure which arises from hearing what we do not understand, the poet must descend from this supposed height, and, in order to excite rational sympathy, he must express himself as other men express themselves. To this it may be added, that while he is only selecting from the real language of men, or, which amounts to the same thing, composing accurately in the spirit of such selection, he is treading upon safe ground, and we know what we are to expect from him. Our feelings are the same with respect to meter; for, as it may be proper to remind the reader, the distinction of meter is regular and uniform, and not, like that which is produced by what is usually called "poetic diction," arbitrary, and subject to infinite caprices upon which no calculation whatever can be

made. In the one case, the reader is utterly at the mercy of the poet respecting what imagery or diction he may choose to connect with the passion; whereas, in the other, the meter obeys certain laws, to which the poet and reader both willingly submit because they are certain, and because no interference is made by them with the passion but such as the concurring testimony of ages has shown to heighten and improve the pleasure which coexists with it.

It will now be proper to answer an obvious question—namely: Why, professing these opinions, have I written in verse? To this, in addition to such answer as is included in what has been already said, I reply, in the first place: Because, however I may have restricted myself, there is still left open to me what confessedly constitutes the most valuable object of all writing, whether in prose or verse—the great and universal passions of men, the most general and interesting of their occupations, and the entire world of nature before me—to supply endless combinations of forms and imagery. Now, supposing for a moment that whatever is interesting in these objects may be as vividly described in prose, why should I be condemned for attempting to superadd to such description the charm which, by the consent of all nations, is acknowledged to exist in metrical language? To this, by such as are yet unconvinced, it may be answered that a very small part of the pleasure given by poetry depends upon the meter, and that it is injudicious to write in meter, unless it be accompanied with the other artificial distinctions of style with which meter is usually accompanied, and that, by such deviation, more will be lost from the shock which will thereby be given to the reader's associations than will be counterbalanced by any pleasure which he can derive from the general power of numbers. In answer to those who still contend for the necessity of accompanying meter with certain appropriate colors of style in order to the accomplishment of its appropriate end, and who also, in my opinion, greatly underrate the power of meter in itself, it might, perhaps, as far as relates to these volumes, have been almost sufficient to observe that poems are extant, written upon more humble subjects, and in a still more naked and simple style, which have continued to give pleasure from generation to generation. Now, if nakedness and simplicity be a defect, the fact here mentioned affords a strong presumption that poems somewhat less naked and simple are capable of affording pleasure at the present day; and, what I wished *chiefly* to attempt, at present, was to

justify myself for having written under the impression of this belief.

But various causes might be pointed out why, when the style is manly, and the subject of some importance, words metrically arranged will long continue to impart such a pleasure to mankind as he who proves the extent of that pleasure will be desirous to impart. The end of poetry is to produce excitement in coexistence with an overbalance of pleasure; but, by the supposition, excitement is an unusual and irregular state of the mind; ideas and feelings do not, in that state, succeed each other in accustomed order. If the words, however, by which this excitement is produced be in themselves powerful, or the images and feelings have an undue proportion of pain connected with them, there is some danger that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds. Now the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods and in a less excited state, cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and restraining the passion by an intertexture of ordinary feeling, and of feeling not strictly and necessarily connected with the passion. This is unquestionably true; and hence, though the opinion will at first appear paradoxical, from the tendency of meter to divest language, in a certain degree, of its reality, and thus to throw a sort of half-consciousness of unsubstantial existence over the whole composition, there can be little doubt but that more pathetic situations and sentiments (that is, those which have a greater proportion of pain connected with them) may be endured in metrical composition, especially in rime, than in prose. The meter of the old ballads is very artless, yet they contain many passages which would illustrate this opinion; and, I hope, if the following poems be attentively perused, similar instances will be found in them. This opinion may be further illustrated by appealing to the reader's own experience of the reluctance with which he comes to the reperusal of the distressful parts of *Clarissa Harlowe*, or *The Gamester;* while Shakespeare's writings, in the most pathetic scenes, never act upon us as pathetic, beyond the bounds of pleasure—an effect which, in a much greater degree than might at first be imagined, is to be ascribed to small, but continual and regular, impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement.—On the other hand (what it must be allowed will much more frequently happen), if the poet's words should be incommensurate with the passion, and inadequate to raise the reader to a height of desir-

able excitement, then (unless the poet's choice of his meter has been grossly injudicious), in the feelings of pleasure which the reader has been accustomed to connect with meter in general, and in the feeling, whether cheerful or melancholy, which he has been accustomed to connect with that particular movement of meter, there will be found something which will greatly contribute to impart passion to the words, and to effect the complex end which the poet proposes to himself.

If I had undertaken a *systematic* defense of the theory here maintained, it would have been my duty to develop the various causes upon which the pleasure received from metrical language depends. Among the chief of these causes is to be reckoned a principle which must be well known to those who have made any of the arts the object of accurate reflection; namely, the pleasure which the mind derives from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude. This principle is the great spring of the activity of our minds, and their chief feeder. From this principle the direction of the sexual appetite, and all the passions connected with it, take their origin; it is the life of our ordinary conversation; and upon the accuracy with which similitude in dissimilitude, and dissimilitude in similitude, are perceived, depend our taste and our moral feelings. It would not be a useless employment to apply this principle to the consideration of meter, and to show that meter is hence enabled to afford much pleasure, and to point out in what manner that pleasure is produced. But my limits will not permit me to enter upon this subject, and I must content myself with a general summary.

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity; the emotion is contemplated, till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment. If nature be thus cautious to preserve in a state of enjoyment a being so employed, the poet ought to profit by the lesson held forth to him, and ought especially to take care that whatever passions he communicates

to his reader, those passions, if his reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. Now the music of harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rime or meter of the same or similar construction, an indistinct perception perpetually renewed of language closely resembling that of real life, and yet, in the circumstance of meter, differing from it so widely —all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling always found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions. This effect is always produced in pathetic and impassioned poetry; while, in lighter compositions, the ease and gracefulness with which the poet manages his numbers are themselves confessedly a principal source of the gratification of the reader. All that it is *necessary* to say, however, upon this subject, may be effected by affirming, what few persons will deny, that, of two descriptions either of passions, manners, or characters, each of them equally well executed, the one in prose and the other in verse, the verse will be read a hundred times where the prose is read once.

Having thus explained a few of my reasons for writing in verse, and why I have chosen subjects from common life, and endeavored to bring my language near to the real language of men, if I have been too minute in pleading my own cause, I have at the same time been treating a subject of general interest; and for this reason a few words shall be added with reference solely to these particular poems, and to some defects which will probably be found in them. I am sensible that my associations must have sometimes been particular instead of general, and that, consequently, giving to things a false importance, I may have sometimes written upon unworthy subjects; but I am less apprehensive on this account than that my language may frequently have suffered from those arbitrary connections of feelings and ideas with particular words and phrases from which no man can altogether protect himself. Hence I have no doubt that, in some instances, feelings, even of the ludicrous, may be given to my readers by expressions which appeared to me tender and pathetic. Such faulty expressions, were I convinced they were faulty at present, and that they must necessarily continue to be so, I would willingly take all reasonable pains to correct. But it is dangerous to make these alterations on the simple authority of

a few individuals, or even of certain classes of men; for where the understanding of an author is not convinced, or his feelings altered, this cannot be done without great injury to himself, for his own feelings are his stay and support; and, if he set them aside in one instance, he may be induced to repeat this act till his mind shall lose all confidence in itself, and becomes utterly debilitated. To this it may be added, that the critic ought never to forget that he is himself exposed to the same errors as the poet, and, perhaps, in a much greater degree, for there can be no presumption in saying of most readers that it is not probable they will be so well acquainted with the various stages of meaning through which words have passed, or with the fickleness or stability of the relations of particular ideas to each other; and, above all, since they are so much less interested in the subject, they may decide lightly and carelessly.

Long as the reader has been detained, I hope he will permit me to caution him against a mode of false criticism which has been applied to poetry, in which the language closely resembles that of life and nature. Such verses have been triumphed over in parodies of which Dr. Johnson's stanza is a fair specimen:

> I put my hat upon my head
> And walked into the Strand,
> And there I met another man
> Whose hat was in his hand.

Immediately under these lines let us place one of the most justly-admired stanzas of the "Babes in the Wood":

> These pretty babes with hand in hand
> Went wandering up and down;
> But never more they saw the man
> Approaching from the town.

In both these stanzas the words, and the order of the words, in no respect differ from the most unimpassioned conversation. There are words in both, for example, "the Strand," and "the town," connected with none but the most familiar ideas; yet the one stanza we admit as admirable, and the other as a fair example of the superlatively contemptible. Whence arises this difference? Not from the meter, not from the language, not from the order of the words; but the *matter* expressed in Dr. Johnson's stanza is contemptible. The proper method of treating

trivial and simple verses, to which Dr. Johnson's stanza would be a fair parallelism, is not to say, this is a bad kind of poetry, or, this is not poetry; but, this wants sense; it is neither interesting in itself, nor can *lead* to anything interesting; the images neither originate in that sane state of feeling which arises out of thought, nor can excite thought or feeling in the reader. This is the only sensible manner of dealing with such verses. Why trouble yourself about the species till you have previously decided upon the genus? Why take pains to prove that an ape is not a Newton, when it is self-evident that he is not a man?

One request I must make of my reader, which is, that in judging these poems he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgment of others. How common is it to hear a person say, I myself do not object to this style of composition, or this or that expression, but, to such and such classes of people, it will appear mean or ludicrous! This mode of criticism, so destructive of all sound unadulterated judgment, is almost universal; let the reader, then, abide independently by his own feelings, and, if he finds himself affected, let him not suffer such conjectures to interfere with his pleasure.

If an author, by any single composition, has impressed us with respect for his talents, it is useful to consider this as affording a presumption that on other occasions where we have been displeased he, nevertheless, may not have written ill or absurdly; and further, to give him so much credit for this one composition as may induce us to review what has displeased us with more care than we should otherwise have bestowed upon it. This is not only an act of justice, but, in our decisions upon poetry especially, may conduce, in a high degree, to the improvement of our own taste; for an *accurate* taste in poetry, and in all the other arts, as Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, is an *acquired* talent, which can only be produced by thought and a long-continued intercourse with the best models of composition. This is mentioned, not with so ridiculous a purpose as to prevent the most inexperienced reader from judging for himself (I have already said that I wish him to judge for himself), but merely to temper the rashness of decision, and to suggest that, if poetry be a subject on which much time has not been bestowed, the judgment may be erroneous, and that, in many cases, it necessarily will be so.

Nothing would, I know, have so effectually contributed to

further the end which I have in view, as to have shown of what kind the pleasure is, and how that pleasure is produced, which is confessedly produced by metrical composition essentially different from that which I have here endeavored to recommend, for the reader will say that he has been pleased by such composition; and what more can be done for him? The power of any art is limited; and he will suspect that, if it be proposed to furnish him with new friends, that can be only upon condition of his abandoning his old friends. Besides, as I have said, the reader is himself conscious of the pleasure which he has received from such composition, composition to which he has peculiarly attached the endearing name of poetry; and all men feel an habitual gratitude, and something of an honorable bigotry, for the objects which have long continued to please them; we not only wish to be pleased, but to be pleased in that particular way in which we have been accustomed to be pleased. There is in these feelings enough to resist a host of arguments; and I should be the less able to combat them successfully, as I am willing to allow that, in order entirely to enjoy the poetry which I am recommending, it would be necessary to give up much of what is ordinarily enjoyed. But would my limits have permitted me to point out how this pleasure is produced, many obstacles might have been removed, and the reader assisted in perceiving that the powers of language are not so limited as he may suppose; and that it is possible for poetry to give other enjoyments, of a purer, more lasting, and more exquisite nature. This part of the subject has not been altogether neglected, but it has not been so much my present aim to prove that the interest excited by some other kinds of poetry is less vivid, and less worthy of the nobler powers of the mind, as to offer reasons for presuming that if my purpose were fulfilled, a species of poetry would be produced which is genuine poetry, in its nature well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and likewise important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations.

From what has been said, and from a perusal of the poems, the reader will be able clearly to perceive the object which I had in view; he will determine how far it has been attained, and, what is a much more important question, whether it be worth attaining; and upon the decision of these two questions will rest my claim to the approbation of the public.

1800 1800

APPENDIX C

From BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

CHAPTER XIV

Occasion of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and the objects originally proposed—Preface to the second edition—The ensuing controversy, its causes and acrimony—Philosophic definitions of a poem and poetry with scholia.

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbors, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination. The sudden charm which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in *this* sense they have been to every human being who, from

*Coleridge seems to have given his tacit consent to the preface as published in the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. While Wordsworth was writing it he was a long and frequent visitor at Dove Cottage, and the two and Dorothy discussed it as the essay took shape. During the years of criticism that followed, however, Coleridge came to see what positions taken in the preface were tenable and what untenable, and in chapters of the *Biographia Literaria*, published in 1817, he expressed his views in the interest of what he considered the truth. These chapters were written some time before their publication. With the preface as a whole he was firmly in accord, though some have felt disappointed that he did not express a more warmly sympathetic attitude toward Wordsworth and the ideas that had once stood for so much in the affections of each of them.

whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves.

In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads;* in which it was agreed that my endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

With this view I wrote "The Ancient Mariner," and was preparing, among other poems, "The Dark Ladie," and the "Christabel," in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the *Lyrical Ballads* were published, and were presented by him as an *experiment,* whether subjects which from their nature rejected the usual ornaments and extra-colloquial style of poems in general might not be so managed in the language of ordinary life as to produce the pleasurable interest which it is the peculiar business of poetry to impart. To the second edition he added a preface of considerable length; in which, notwithstanding some passages of apparently a contrary import, he was understood to contend for the extension of this style to poetry of all kinds, and to reject as vicious and indefensible all phrases and forms of style that were not included in what he (unfortu-

nately, I think, adopting an equivocal expression) called the language of *real* life. From this preface, prefixed to poems in which it was impossible to deny the presence of original genius, however mistaken its direction might be deemed, arose the whole long-continued controversy. For from the conjunction of perceived power with supposed heresy, I explain the inveteracy and in some instances, I grieve to say, the acrimonious passions with which the controversy has been conducted by the assailants.

Had Mr. Wordsworth's poems been the silly, the childish things which they were for a long time described as being; had they been really distinguished from the compositions of other poets merely by meanness of language and inanity of thought; had they indeed contained nothing more than what is found in the parodies and pretended imitations of them—they must have sunk at once, a dead weight, into the slough of oblivion, and have dragged the preface along with them. But year after year increased the number of Mr. Wordsworth's admirers. They were found, too, not in the lower classes of the reading public, but chiefly among young men of strong sensibility and meditative minds; and their admiration (inflamed perhaps in some degree by opposition) was distinguished by its intensity, I might almost say, by its religious fervor. These facts, and the intellectual energy of the author, which was more or less consciously felt, where it was outwardly and even boisterously denied, meeting with sentiments of aversion to his opinions, and of alarm at their consequences, produced an eddy of criticism which would of itself have borne up the poems by the violence with which it whirled them round and round. With many parts of this preface, in the sense attributed to them, and which the words undoubtedly seem to authorize, I never concurred, but on the contrary objected to them as erroneous in principle, and as contradictory (in appearance at least) both to other parts of the same preface and to the author's own practice in the greater number of the poems themselves. Mr. Wordsworth in his recent collection has, I find, degraded this prefatory disquisition to the end of his second volume, to be read or not at the reader's choice. But he has not, as far as I can discover, announced any change in his poetic creed. At all events, considering it as the source of a controversy in which I have been honored more than I deserve by the frequent conjunction of my name with his, I think it expedient to declare, once for all, in what points I coincide with his opinions, and in what points I altogether differ. But in order to render myself intelligible I must

previously, in as few words as possible, explain my ideas, first, of a poem; and secondly, of poetry itself, in kind and in essence.

The office of philosophical disquisition consists in just distinction, while it is the privilege of the philosopher to preserve himself constantly aware that distinction is not division. In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth, we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts; and this is the technical *process* of philosophy. But having so done, we must then restore them in our conceptions to the unity in which they actually coexist; and this is the *result* of philosophy. A poem contains the same elements as a prose composition; the difference, therefore, must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of a different object being proposed. According to the difference of the object will be the difference of the combination. It is possible that the object may be merely to facilitate the recollection of any given facts or observations by artificial arrangement; and the composition will be a poem, merely because it is distinguished from prose by meter, or by rime, or by both conjointly. In this, the lowest sense, a man might attribute the name of a poem to the well-known enumeration of the days in the several months:

> Thirty days hath September,
> April, June, and November, etc.,

and others of the same class and purpose. And as a particular pleasure is found in anticipating the recurrence of sounds and quantities, all compositions that have this charm superadded, whatever be their contents, *may* be entitled poems.

So much for the superficial form. A difference of object and contents supplies an additional ground of distinction. The immediate purpose may be the communication of truths—either of truth absolute and demonstrable, as in works of science; or of facts experienced and recorded, as in history. Pleasure, and that of the highest and most permanent kind, may result from the attainment of the end; but it is not itself the immediate end. In other works the communication of pleasure may be the immediate purpose; and though truth, either moral or intellectual, ought to be the ultimate end, yet this will distinguish the character of the author, not the class to which the work belongs. Blest indeed is that state of society in which the immediate pur-

pose would be baffled by the perversion of the proper ultimate end; in which no charm of diction or imagery could exempt the "Bathyllus" even of an Anacreon, or the "Alexis" of Vergil, from disgust and aversion!

But the communication of pleasure may be the immediate object of a work not metrically composed; and that object may have been in a high degree attained, as in novels and romances. Would, then, the mere superaddition of meter, with or without rime, entitle these to the name of poems? The answer is, that nothing can permanently please which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise. If meter be superadded, all other parts must be made consonant with it. They must be such as to justify the perpetual and distinct attention to each part, which an exact correspondent recurrence of accent and sound are calculated to excite. The final definition, then, so deduced, may be thus worded: A poem is that species of composition which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth, and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole* as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component *part.*

* * *

But if this should be admitted as a satisfactory character of a poem, we have still to seek for a definition of poetry. The writings of Plato, and Bishop Taylor, and the *Theoria Sacra* of Burnet, furnish undeniable proofs that poetry of the highest kind may exist without meter, and even without the contradistinguishing objects of a poem. The first chapter of *Isaiah* (indeed a very large portion of the whole book) is poetry in the most emphatic sense; yet it would be not less irrational than strange to assert that pleasure, and not truth, was the immediate object of the prophet. In short, whatever specific import we attach to the word *poetry,* there will be found involved in it, as a necessary consequence, that a poem of any length neither can be, nor ought to be, all poetry. Yet if an harmonious whole is to be produced, the remaining parts must be preserved *in keeping* with the poetry; and this can be no otherwise effected than by such a studied selection and artificial arrangement as will partake of one, though not a peculiar, property of poetry. And this again can be no other than the property of exciting a more continuous and

equal attention than the language of prose aims at, whether colloquial or written.

My own conclusions on the nature of poetry, in the strictest use of the word, have been in part anticipated in the preceding disquisition on the fancy and imagination. What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, What is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions of the poet's own mind.

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) *fuses* each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, control *(laxis effertur habenis)* reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgment ever awake, and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry. "Doubtless," as Sir John Davies observes of the soul (and his words may with slight alteration be applied, and even more appropriately, to the poetic imagination)—

> Doubtless this could not be, but that she turns
> Bodies to spirit by sublimation strange,
> As fire converts to fire the things it burns,
> As we our food into our nature change.
>
> From their gross matter she abstracts their forms,
> And draws a kind of quintessence from things;
> Which to her proper nature she transforms,
> To bear them light on her celestial wings.

Thus does she, when from individual states
She doth abstract the universal kinds;
Which then, reclothed in divers names and fates,
Steal access through our senses to our minds.

Finally, good sense is the body of poetic genius, fancy its drapery, motion its life, and imagination the soul that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.

CHAPTER XVII

Examination of the tenets peculiar to Mr. Wordsworth—Rustic life (above all, *low* and rustic life) especially unfavorable to the formation of a human diction—The *best* parts of language the product of philosophers, not of clowns or shepherds—Poetry essentially ideal and generic—The language of Milton as much the language of *real* life, yea, incomparably more so than that of the cottager.

As far, then, as Mr. Wordsworth in his preface contended, and most ably contended, for a reformation in our poetic diction; as far as he has evinced the truth of passion, and the *dramatic* propriety of those figures and metaphors in the original poets, which, stripped of their justifying reasons, and converted into mere artifices of connection or ornament, constitute the characteristic falsity in the poetic style of the moderns; and as far as he has, with equal acuteness and clearness, pointed out the process by which this change was effected, and the resemblances between that state into which the reader's mind is thrown by the pleasurable confusion of thought from an unaccustomed train of words and images, and that state which is induced by the natural language of impassioned feeling—he undertook a useful task, and deserves all praise, both for the attempt and for the execution. The provocations to this remonstrance in behalf of truth and nature were still of perpetual recurrence before and after the publication of this preface. I cannot likewise but add that the comparison of such poems of merit, as have been given to the public within the last ten or twelve years, with the majority of those produced previously to the appearance of that preface, leave no doubt on my mind that Mr. Wordsworth is fully justified in believing his efforts to have been by no means ineffectual. Not only in the verses of those who have professed their admiration of his genius, but even of those who have distinguished them-

selves by hostility to his theory, and depreciation of his writings, are the impressions of his principles plainly visible. It is possible that with these principles others may have been blended, which are not equally evident, and some which are unsteady and subvertible from the narrowness or imperfection of their basis. But it is more than possible that these errors of defect or exaggeration, by kindling and feeding the controversy, may have conduced not only to the wider propagation of the accompanying truths, but that, by their frequent presentation to the mind in an excited state, they may have won for them a more permanent and practical result. A man will borrow a part from his opponent the more easily, if he feels himself justified in continuing to reject a part. While there remain important points in which he can still feel himself in the right, in which he still finds firm footing for continued resistance, he will gradually adopt those opinions which were the least remote from his own convictions, as not less congruous with his own theory than with that which he reprobates. In like manner with a kind of instinctive prudence, he will abandon by little and little his weakest posts, till at length he seems to forget that they had ever belonged to him, or affects to consider them at most as accidental and "petty annexments," the removal of which leaves the citadel unhurt and unendangered.

My own differences from certain supposed parts of Mr. Wordsworth's theory ground themselves on the assumption that his words had been rightly interpreted, as purporting that the proper diction for poetry in general consists altogether in a language taken, with due exceptions, from the mouths of men in real life, a language which actually constitutes the natural conversation of men under the influence of natural feelings. My objection is, first, that in any sense this rule is applicable only to certain classes of poetry; secondly, that even to these classes it is not applicable, except in such a sense as hath never by anyone (as far as I know or have read) been denied or doubted; and, lastly, that as far as, and in that degree in which, it is practicable, yet, as a rule, it is useless, if not injurious, and therefore either need not, or ought not to be, practiced. The poet informs his reader that he had generally chosen *low and rustic* life; but not *as* low and rustic, or in order to repeat that pleasure of doubtful moral effect which persons of elevated rank and of superior refinement oftentimes derive from a happy imitation of the rude unpolished manners and discourse of their inferiors. For the pleasure so

derived may be traced to three exciting causes. The first is the naturalness, in fact, of the things represented. The second is the apparent naturalness of the representation, as raised and qualified by an imperceptible infusion of the author's own knowledge and talent, which infusion does, indeed, constitute it an *imitation* as distinguished from a mere *copy*. The third cause may be found in the reader's conscious feeling of his superiority awakened by the contrast presented to him; even as for the same purpose the kings and great barons of yore retained sometimes actual clowns and fools, but more frequently shrewd and witty fellows in that character. These, however, were not Mr. Wordsworth's objects. He chose low and rustic life, "because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil, in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and from the necessary character of rural occupations are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature."

Now it is clear to me that, in the most interesting of the poems, in which the author is more or less dramatic, as "The Brothers," "Michael," "Ruth," "The Mad Mother," etc., the persons introduced are by no means taken from low or rustic life in the common acceptation of those words; and it is not less clear that the sentiments and language, as far as they can be conceived to have been really transferred from the minds and conversation of such persons, are attributable to causes and circumstances not necessarily connected with "their occupations and abode." The thoughts, feelings, language, and manners of the shepherd-farmers in the vales of Cumberland and Westmoreland, as far as they are actually adopted in those poems, may be accounted for from causes which will and do produce the same results in every state of life, whether in town or country. As the two principal I rank that *independence* which raises a man above servitude, or daily toil for the profit of others, yet not above the necessity of industry and a frugal simplicity of domestic life; and the accompanying unambitious, but solid and

religious, *education* which has rendered few books familiar but the Bible and the liturgy or hymn book. To this latter cause, indeed, which is so far accidental that it is the blessing of particular countries and a particular age, not the product of particular places or employments, the poet owes the show of probability that his personages might really feel, think, and talk with any tolerable resemblance to his representation. It is an excellent remark of Dr. Henry More's (*Enthusiasmus triumphatus,* Sec. xxxv), that "a man of confined education, but of good parts, by constant reading of the Bible will naturally form a more winning and commanding rhetoric than those that are learned, the intermixture of tongues and of artificial phrases debasing *their* style."

It is, moreover, to be considered that to the formation of healthy feelings, and a reflecting mind, *negations* involve impediments not less formidable than sophistication and vicious intermixture. I am convinced that for the human soul to prosper in rustic life a certain vantage-ground is prerequisite. It is not every man that is likely to be improved by a country life or by country labors. Education, or original sensibility, or both, must preëxist, if the changes, forms, and incidents of nature are to prove a sufficient stimulant. And where these are not sufficient, the mind contracts and hardens by want of stimulants; and the man becomes selfish, sensual, gross, and hard-hearted. Let the management of the Poor Laws in Liverpool, Manchester, or Bristol be compared with the ordinary dispensation of the poor rates in agricultural villages, where the farmers are the overseers and guardians of the poor. If my own experience have not been particularly unfortunate, as well as that of the many respectable country clergymen with whom I have conversed on the subject, the result would engender more than skepticism concerning the desirable influences of low and rustic life in and for itself. Whatever may be concluded on the other side, from the stronger local attachments and enterprising spirit of the Swiss, and other mountaineers, applies to a particular mode of pastoral life, under forms of property that permit and beget manners truly rēpublican, not to rustic life in general, or to the absence of artificial cultivation. On the contrary, the mountaineers, whose manners have been so often eulogized, are in general better educated and greater readers than men of equal rank elsewhere. But where this is not the case,

as among the peasantry of North Wales, the ancient mountains, with all their terrors and all their glories, are pictures to the blind, and music to the deaf.

I should not have entered so much into detail upon this passage, but here seems to be the point to which all the lines of difference converge as to their source and center. (I mean, as far as, and in whatever respect, my poetic creed *does* differ from the doctrines promulgated in this preface.) I adopt with full faith the principle of Aristotle, that poetry as poetry, is essentially *ideal,* that it avoids and excludes all accident; that its apparent individualities of rank, character, or occupation must be representative of a class; and that the persons of poetry must be clothed with generic attributes, with the *common* attributes of the class—not with such as one gifted individual might *possibly* possess, but such as from his situation it is most probable beforehand that he *would* possess. If my premises are right and my deductions legitimate, it follows that there can be no *poetic* medium between the swains of Theocritus and those of an imaginary golden age.

The characters of the vicar and the shepherd-mariner in the poem of "The Brothers," that of the shepherd of Greenhead Ghyll in the "Michael," have all the verisimilitude and representative quality that the purposes of poetry can require. They are persons of a known and abiding class, and their manners and sentiments the natural product of circumstances common to the class. Take *Michael* for instance: [Here follows an extract from "Michael," ll. 42-77.] On the other hand, in the poems which are pitched at a lower note, as the "Harry Gill," "The Idiot Boy," etc., the feelings are those of human nature in general, though the poet has judiciously laid the scene in the country, in order to place himself in the vicinity of interesting images, without the necessity of ascribing a sentimental perception of their beauty to the persons of his drama. In "The Idiot Boy," indeed, the mother's character is not so much a real and native product of a "situation where the essential passions of the heart find a better soil, in which they can attain their maturity and speak a plainer and more emphatic language," as it is an impersonation of an instinct abandoned by judgment. Hence the two following charges seem to me not wholly groundless; at least they are the only plausible objections which I have heard to that fine poem. The one is, that the author has not, in the poem itself, taken sufficient care to preclude from the reader's fancy the disgusting

images of ordinary morbid idiocy, which yet it was by no means his intention to represent. He has even by the "burr, burr, burr," uncounteracted by any preceding description of the boy's beauty, assisted in recalling them. The other is, that the idiocy of the boy is so evenly balanced by the folly of the mother as to present to the general reader rather a laughable burlesque on the blindness of anile dotage, than an analytic display of maternal affection in its ordinary workings.

In "The Thorn," the poet himself acknowledges in a note the necessity of an introductory poem, in which he should have portrayed the character of the person from whom the words of the poem are supposed to proceed: a superstitious man moderately imaginative, of slow faculties and deep feelings, "a captain of a small trading vessel, for example, who, being past the middle age of life, had retired upon an annuity, or small independent income, to some village or country town of which he was not a native, or in which he had not been accustomed to live. Such men, having nothing to do, become credulous and talkative from indolence." But in a poem, still more in a lyric poem (and the Nurse in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* alone prevents me from extending the remark even to dramatic *poetry*, if indeed the Nurse itself can be deemed altogether a case in point), it is not possible to imitate truly a dull and garrulous discourser, without repeating the effects of dullness and garrulity. However this may be, I dare assert that the parts (and these form the far larger portion of the whole) which might as well or still better have proceeded from the poet's own imagination, and have been spoken in his own character, are those which have given, and which will continue to give, universal delight; and that the passages exclusively appropriate to the supposed narrator, such as the last couplet of the third stanza, the seven last lines of the tenth, and the five following stanzas, with the exception of the four admirable lines at the commencement of the fourteenth, are felt by many unprejudiced and unsophisticated hearts as sudden and unpleasant sinkings from the height to which the poet had previously lifted them, and to which he again re-elevates both himself and his reader.

If, then, I am compelled to doubt the theory by which the choice of characters was to be directed, not only *a priori*, from grounds of reason, but both from the few instances in which the poet himself need be supposed to have been governed by it, and from the comparative inferiority of those instances—still more

must I hesitate in my assent to the sentence which immediately follows the former citation, and which I can neither admit as particular fact nor as general rule. "The language, too, of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust), because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived, and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the action of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions." To this I reply that a rustic's language, purified from all provincialism and grossness, and so far reconstructed as can be made consistent with the rules of grammar (which are in essence no other than the laws of universal logic, applied to psychological materials), will not differ from the language of any other man of common sense, however learned or refined he may be, except as far as the notions which the rustic has to convey are fewer and more indiscriminate. This will become still clearer if we add the consideration (equally important though less obvious) that the rustic from the more imperfect development of his faculties, and from the lower state of their cultivation, aims almost solely to convey insulated facts, either those of his scanty experience or his traditional belief; while the educated man chiefly seeks to discover and express those connections of things, or those relative bearings of fact to fact, from which some more or less general law is deducible. For facts are valuable to a wise man chiefly as they lead to the discovery of the indwelling law, which is the true being of things, the sole solution of their modes of existence, and in the knowledge of which consists our dignity and our power.

As little can I agree with the assertion that from the objects with which the rustic hourly communicates the best part of language is formed. For, first, if to communicate with an object implies such an acquaintance with it as renders it capable of being discriminately reflected on, the distinct knowledge of an uneducated rustic would furnish a very scanty vocabulary. The few things, and modes of action, requisite for his bodily conveniences, would alone be individualized, while all the rest of nature would be expressed by a small number of confused general terms. Secondly, I deny that the words and combinations of words derived from the objects with which the rustic is familiar, whether with distinct or confused knowledge, can be

justly said to form the *best* part of language. It is more than probable that many classes of the brute creation possess discriminating sounds, by which they can convey to each other notices of such objects as concern their food, shelter, or safety. Yet we hesitate to call the aggregate of such sounds a language, otherwise than metaphorically. The best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes and results of imagination, the greater part of which have no place in the consciousness of uneducated man, though in civilized society, by imitation and passive remembrance of what they hear from their religious instructors and other superiors, the most uneducated share in the harvest which they neither sowed nor reaped. If the history of the phrases in hourly currency among our peasants were traced, a person not previously aware of the fact would be surprised at finding so large a number which three or four centuries ago were the exclusive property of the universities and the schools, and, at the commencement of the Reformation, had been transferred from the school to the pulpit, and thus gradually passed into common life. The extreme difficulty, and often the impossibility, of finding words for the simplest moral and intellectual processes of the languages of uncivilized tribes has proved perhaps the weightiest obstacle to the progress of our most zealous and adroit missionaries. Yet these tribes are surrounded by the same nature as our peasants are, but in still more impressive forms; and they are, moreover, obliged to particularize many more of them. When, therefore, Mr. Wordsworth adds, "accordingly, such a language" (meaning, as before, the language of rustic life purified from provincialism), "arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical, language than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets, who think they are conferring honor upon themselves and their art in proportion as they indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression"—it may be answered that the language which he has in view can be attributed to rustics with no greater right than the style of Hooker or Bacon to Tom Brown or Sir Roger L'Estrange. Doubtless, if what is peculiar to each were omitted in each, the result must needs be the same. Further, that the poet who uses an illogical diction, or a style fitted to excite only the low and changeable pleasure of wonder by means of groundless novelty, substitutes a language

of folly and vanity, not for that of the rustic, but for that of good sense and natural feeling.

Here let me be permitted to remind the reader that the positions which I controvert are contained in the sentences: "a selection of the *real* language of men"; "the language of these men" (that is, men in low and rustic life) "I propose to myself to imitate, and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men." "Between the language of prose and that of metrical composition there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference." It is against these exclusively that my opposition is directed.

I object, in the very first instance, to an equivocation in the use of the word "real." Every man's language varies, according to the extent of his knowledge, the activity of his faculties, and the depth or quickness of his feelings. Every man's language has, first, its individualities; secondly, the common properties of the class to which he belongs; and, thirdly, words and phrases of universal use. The language of Hooker, Bacon, Bishop Taylor, and Burke differs from the common language of the learned class only by the superior number and novelty of the thoughts and relations which they had to convey. The language of Algernon Sidney differs not at all from that which every well-educated gentleman would wish to write, and (with due allowances for the undeliberateness, and less connected train, of thinking natural and proper to conversation) such as he would wish to talk. Neither one nor the other differ half so much from the general language of cultivated society as the language of Mr. Wordsworth's homeliest composition differs from that of a common peasant. For "real," therefore, we must substitute *ordinary*, or *lingua communis*. And this, we have proved, is no more to be found in the phraseology of low and rustic life than in that of any other class. Omit the peculiarities of each, and the result of course must be common to all. And assuredly the omissions and changes to be made in the language of rustics, before it could be transferred to any species of poem, except the drama or other professed imitation, are at least as numerous and weighty as would be required in adapting to the same purpose the ordinary language of tradesmen and manufacturers. Not to mention that the language so highly extolled by Mr. Wordsworth varies in every county, nay, in every village, according to the accidental character of the clergyman, the existence or the non-existence of schools, or even, perhaps, as the exciseman, publican, or barber happen to be, or not to be, zealous politicians and readers

of the weekly newspaper *pro bono publico.* Anterior to cultivation the *lingua communis* of every country, as Dante has well observed, exists everywhere in parts and nowhere as a whole.

Neither is the case rendered at all more tenable by the addition of the words "in a state of excitement." For the nature of a man's words, where he is strongly affected by joy, grief, or anger, must necessarily depend on the number and quality of the general truths, conceptions, and images, and of the words expressing them, with which his mind had been previously stored. For the property of passion is not to create, but to set in increased activity. At least, whatever new connections of thoughts or images, or (which is equally, if not more than equally, the appropriate effect of strong excitement) whatever generalizations of truth or experience, the heat of passion may produce, yet the terms of their conveyance must have preëxisted in his former conversations, and are only collected and crowded together by the unusual stimulation. It is indeed very possible to adopt in a poem the unmeaning repetitions, habitual phrases, and other blank counters which an unfurnished or confused understanding interposes at short intervals, in order to keep hold of his subject, which is still slipping from him, and to give him time for recollection, or in mere aid of vacancy, as in the scanty companies of a country stage the same player pops backwards and forwards, in order to prevent the appearance of empty spaces, in the procession of *Macbeth* or *Henry VIII.* But what assistance to the poet, or ornament to the poem, these can supply, I am at a loss to conjecture. Nothing assuredly can differ either in origin or in mode more widely from the apparent tautologies of intense and turbulent feeling, in which the passion is greater and of longer endurance than to be exhausted or satisfied by a single representation of the image or incident exciting it. Such repetitions I admit to be a beauty of the highest kind, as illustrated by Mr. Wordsworth himself from the song of Deborah: "At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead."

From CHAPTER XVIII

Language of metrical composition, why and wherein essentially different from that of prose. . . .

I conclude, therefore, that the attempt is impracticable, and that, were it not impracticable, it would still be useless. For

the very power of making the selection implies the previous possession of the language selected. Or where can the poet have lived? And by what rules could he direct his choice, which would not have enabled him to select and arrange his words by the light of his own judgment? We do not adopt the language of a class by the mere adoption of such words exclusively as that class would use, or at least understand, but likewise by following the order in which the words of such men are wont to succeed each other. Now this order, in the intercourse of uneducated men, is distinguished from the diction of their superiors in knowledge and power, by the greater disjunction and separation in the component parts of that, whatever it be, which they wish to communicate. There is a want of that prospectiveness of mind, that *surview,* which enables a man to foresee the whole of what he is to convey, appertaining to any one point, and by this means so to subordinate and arrange the different parts according to their relative importance as to convey it at once, and as an organized whole.

Now I will take the first stanza on which I have chanced to open in the *Lyrical Ballads.* It is one of the most simple and the least peculiar in its language:

> In distant countries have I been,
> And yet I have not often seen
> A healthy man, a man full grown,
> Weep in the public roads alone.
> But such a one, on English ground,
> And in the broad highway, I met;
> Along the broad highway he came,
> His cheeks with tears were wet:
> Sturdy he seemed, though he was sad;
> And in his arms a lamb he had.

The words here are doubtless such as are current in all ranks of life, and of course not less so in the hamlet and cottage than in the shop, manufactory, college, or palace. But is this the *order* in which the rustic would have placed the words? I am grievously deceived if the following less compact mode of commencing the same tale be not a far more faithful copy. "I have been in a many parts, far and near, and I don't know that I ever saw before a man crying by himself in the public road—a grown man I mean—that was neither sick nor hurt," etc., etc. But when I turn to the following stanza in "The Thorn":

At all times of the day and night
This wretched woman thither goes;
And she is known to every star,
And every wind that blows;
And there, beside the thorn, she sits,
When the blue daylight's in the skies,
And when the whirlwind's on the hill,
Or frosty air is keen and still;
And to herself she cries,
"Oh, misery! Oh, misery!
Oh, woe is me! Oh, misery!"

and compare this with the language of ordinary men, or with that which I can conceive at all likely to proceed, in real life, from such a narrator as is supposed in the note to the poem—compare it either in the succession of the images or of the sentences—I am reminded of the sublime prayer and hymn of praise which Milton, in opposition to an established liturgy, presents as a fair specimen of common extemporary devotion, and such as we might expect to hear from every self-inspired minister of a conventicle! And I reflect with delight how little a mere theory, though of his own workmanship, interferes with the processes of genuine imagination in a man of true poetic genius, who possesses, as Mr. Wordsworth, if ever man did, most assuredly does possess,

The Vision and the Faculty divine.

* * *

APPENDIX D

A REVIEW OF WORDSWORTH'S *EXCURSION*

FRANCIS JEFFREY*

[From *The Edinburgh Review,* November, 1814]

This will never do. It bears no doubt the stamp of the author's heart and fancy, but unfortunately not half so visibly as that of his peculiar system. His former poems were intended to recommend that system, and to bespeak favor for it by their individual merit; but this, we suspect, must be recommended by the system, and can only expect to succeed where it has been previously established. It is longer, weaker, and tamer than any of Mr. Wordsworth's other productions; with less boldness of originality, and less even of that extreme simplicity and lowliness of tone which wavered so prettily, in the *Lyrical Ballads,* between silliness and pathos. We have imitations of Cowper and even of Milton here, engrafted on the natural drawl of the Lakers, and all diluted into harmony by that profuse and irrepressible wordiness which deluges all the blank verse of this school of poetry, and lubricates and weakens the whole structure of their style.

Though it fairly fills four hundred and twenty good quarto pages, without note, vignette, or any sort of extraneous assistance, it is stated in the title—with something of an imprudent candor—to be but "a portion" of a larger work; and in the preface, where an attempt is rather unsuccessfully made to explain the whole design, it is still more rashly disclosed that it is but "a part of a second part of a *long* and laborious work," which is to consist of three parts. What Mr. Wordsworth's ideas of

*Francis Jeffrey, editor of the *Edinburgh Review,* was the foremost and probably the ablest of English critics of his day. This particular criticism has often been cited as an example of the unsympathetic, even savage, attacks wont to be made by reviewers of that day upon works of genius and enduring merit. It is indeed unsympathetic, and fault-finding rather than just, for it judges by defects rather than by merit. But it nevertheless contains much of well-founded criticism, much truth concerning Wordsworth's own methods, and shows how his poetry as a whole affected the intelligent but conservative minds of his time.

length are, we have no means of accurately judging; but we cannot help suspecting that they are liberal, to a degree that will alarm the weakness of most modern readers. As far as we can gather from the preface, the entire poem—or one of them (for we really are not sure whether there is to be one or two) —is of a biographical nature, and is to contain the history of the author's mind, and of the origin and progress of his poetical powers, up to the period when they were sufficiently matured to qualify him for the great work on which he has been so long employed. Now the quarto before us contains an account of one of his youthful rambles in the vales of Cumberland, and occupies precisely the period of three days; so that, by the use of a very powerful calculus, some estimate may be formed of the probable extent of the entire biography.

This small specimen, however, and the statements with which it is prefaced, have been sufficient to set our minds at rest in one particular. The case of Mr. Wordsworth, we perceive, is now manifestly hopeless; and we give him up as altogether incurable, and beyond the power of criticism. We cannot indeed altogether omit taking precautions now and then against the spreading of the malady; but for himself, though we shall watch the progress of his symptoms as a matter of professional curiosity and instruction, we really think it right not to harass him any longer with nauseous remedies, but rather to throw in cordials and lenitives, and wait in patience for the natural termination of the disorder. In order to justify this desertion of our patient, however, it is proper to state why we despair of the success of a more active practice.

A man who has been for twenty years at work on such matter as is now before us, and who comes complacently forward with a whole quarto of it, after all the admonitions he has received, cannot reasonably be expected to "change his hand, or check his pride," upon the suggestion of far weightier monitors than we can pretend to be. Inveterate habit must now have given a kind of sanctity to the errors of early taste, and the very powers of which we lament the perversion have probably become incapable of any other application. The very quantity, too, that he has written, and is at this moment working up for publication upon the old pattern, makes it almost hopeless to look for any change of it. All this is so much capital already sunk in the concern, which must be sacrificed if it be abandoned; and no man likes to give up for lost the time and talent and labor

which he has embodied in any permanent production. We were not previously aware of these obstacles to Mr. Wordsworth's conversion; and, considering the peculiarities of his former writings merely as the result of certain wanton and capricious experiments on public taste and indulgence, conceived it to be our duty to discourage their repetition by all the means in our power. We now see clearly, however, how the case stands, and, making up our minds, though with the most sincere pain and reluctance, to consider him as finally lost to the good cause of poetry, shall endeavor to be thankful for the occasional gleams of tenderness and beauty which the natural force of his imagination and affections must still shed over all his productions, and to which we shall ever turn with delight, in spite of the affectation and mysticism and prolixity with which they are so abundantly contrasted.

Long habits of seclusion, and an excessive ambition of originality, can alone account for the disproportion which seems to exist between this author's taste and his genius, or for the devotion with which he has sacrificed so many precious gifts at the shrine of those paltry idols which he has set up for himself among his lakes and his mountains. Solitary musings, amidst such scenes, might no doubt be expected to nurse up the mind to the majesty of poetical conception (though it is remarkable that all the greater poets lived, or had lived, in the full current of society); but the collision of equal minds, the admonition of prevailing impressions, seems necessary to reduce its redundancies, and repress that tendency to extravagance or puerility, into which the self-indulgence and self-admiration of genius is so apt to be betrayed, when it is allowed to wanton, without awe or restraint, in the triumph and delight of its own intoxication. That its flights should be graceful and glorious in the eyes of men, it seems almost to be necessary that they should be made in the consciousness that men's eyes are to behold them, and that the inward transport and vigor by which they are inspired should be tempered by an occasional reference to what will be thought of them by those ultimate dispensers of glory. An habitual and general knowledge of the few settled and permanent maxims which form the canon of general taste in all large and polished societies—a certain tact, which informs us at once that many things which we still love and are moved by in secret must necessarily be despised as childish, or derided as absurd, in all such societies—though it will not stand in the place of genius,

seems necessary to the success of its exertions, and, though it will never enable anyone to produce the higher beauties of art, can alone secure the talent which does produce them from errors that must render it useless. Those who have most of the talent, however, commonly acquire this knowledge with the greatest facility; and if Mr. Wordsworth, instead of confining himself almost entirely to the society of the dalesmen and cottagers and little children who form the subjects of his book, had condescended to mingle a little more with the people that were to read and judge of it, we cannot help thinking that its texture would have been considerably improved. At least it appears to us to be absolutely impossible that anyone who had lived or mixed familiarly with men of literature and ordinary judgment in poetry (of course we exclude the coadjutors and disciples of his own school) could ever have fallen into such gross faults, or so long mistaken them for beauties. His first essays we looked upon in a good degree as poetical paradoxes, maintained experimentally, in order to display talent and court notoriety, and so maintained with no more serious belief in their truth than is usually generated by an ingenious and animated defense of other paradoxes. But when we find that he has been for twenty years exclusively employed upon articles of this very fabric, and that he has still enough of raw material on hand to keep him so employed for twenty years to come, we cannot refuse him the justice of believing that he is a sincere convert to his own system, and must ascribe the peculiarities of his composition, not to any transient affectation or accidental caprice of imagination, but to a settled perversity of taste or understanding, which has been fostered, if not altogether created, by the circumstances to which we have already alluded.

The volume before us, if we were to describe it very shortly, we should characterize as a tissue of moral and devotional ravings, in which innumerable changes are rung upon a few very simple and familiar ideas, but with such an accompaniment of long words, long sentences, and unwieldy phrases, and such a hubbub of strained raptures and fantastical sublimities, that it is often extremely difficult for the most skillful and attentive student to obtain a glimpse of the author's meaning, and altogether impossible for an ordinary reader to conjecture what he is about. Moral and religious enthusiasm, though undoubtedly poetical emotions, are at the same time but dangerous inspirers of poetry, nothing being so apt to run unto interminable dullness or melli-

fluous extravagance, without giving the unfortunate author the slightest intimation of his danger. His laudable zeal for the efficacy of his preachments he very naturally mistakes for the ardor of poetical inspiration; and, while dealing out the high words and glowing phrases which are so readily supplied by themes of this description, can scarcely avoid believing that he is eminently original and impressive. All sorts of commonplace notions and expressions are sanctified in his eyes by the sublime ends for which they are employed, and the mystical verbiage of the Methodist pulpit is repeated, till the speaker entertains no doubt that he is the elected organ of divine truth and persuasion. But if such be the common hazards of seeking inspiration from those potent fountains, it may easily be conceived what chance Mr. Wordsworth had of escaping their enchantment, with his natural propensities to wordiness, and his unlucky habit of debasing pathos with vulgarity. The fact accordingly is that in this production he is more obscure than a Pindaric poet of the seventeenth century, and more verbose "than even himself of yore"; while the willfulness with which he persists in choosing his examples of intellectual dignity and tenderness exclusively from the lowest ranks of society will be sufficiently apparent from the circumstance of his having thought fit to make his chief prolocutor in this poetical dialogue, and chief advocate of Providence and Virtue, *an old Scotch peddler*—retired indeed from business, but still rambling about in his former haunts, and gossiping among his old customers, without his pack on his shoulders. The other persons of the drama are a retired military chaplain, who has grown half an atheist and half a misanthrope, the wife of an unprosperous weaver, a servant girl with her infant, a parish pauper, and one or two other personages of equal rank and dignity.

The character of the work is decidedly didactic; and more than nine-tenths of it are occupied with a species of dialogue, or rather a series of long sermons or harangues which pass between the peddler, the author, the old chaplain, and a worthy vicar, who entertains the whole party at dinner on the last day of their excursion. The incidents which occur in the course of it are as few and trifling as can be imagined; and those which the different speakers narrate in the course of their discourses are introduced rather to illustrate their arguments or opinions than for any interest they are supposed to possess of their own. The doctrine which the work is intended to enforce, we are by no

means certain that we have discovered. In so far as we can collect, however, it seems to be neither more nor less than the old familiar one, that a firm belief in the providence of a wise and beneficent Being must be our great stay and support under all afflictions and perplexities upon earth, and that there are indications of his power and goodness in all the aspects of the visible universe, whether living or inanimate, every part of which should therefore be regarded with love and reverence, as exponents of those great attributes. We can testify, at least, that these salutary and important truths are inculcated at far greater length, and with more repetitions, than in any ten volumes of sermons that we ever perused. It is also maintained, with equal conciseness and originality, that there is frequently much good sense, as well as much enjoyment, in the humbler conditions of life, and that, in spite of great vices and abuses, there is a reasonable allowance both of happiness and goodness in society at large. If there be any deeper or more recondite doctrines in Mr. Wordsworth's book, we must confess that they have escaped us. [Here follow criticisms of specific passages, and the article concludes:]

Nobody can be more disposed to do justice to the great powers of Mr. Wordsworth than we are; and from the first time that he came before us down to the present moment, we have uniformly testified in their favor, and assigned indeed our high sense of their value as the chief ground of the bitterness with which we resented their perversion. That perversion, however, is now far more visible than their original dignity; and while we collect the fragments, it is impossible not to lament the ruins from which we are condemned to pick them. If any one should doubt of the existence of such a perversion, or be disposed to dispute about the instances we have hastily brought forward, we would just beg leave to refer him to the general plan and the characters of the poem now before us. Why should Mr. Wordsworth have made his hero a superannuated peddler? What but the most wretched and provoking perversity of taste and judgment could induce anyone to place his chosen advocate of wisdom and virtue in so absurd and fantastic a condition? Did Mr. Wordsworth really imagine that his favorite doctrines were likely to gain anything in point of effect or authority by being put into the mouth of a person accustomed to higgle about tape or brass sleeve-buttons? Or is it not plain that, independent of the ridicule and disgust which such a personification must

give to many of his readers, its adoption exposes his work throughout to the charge of revolting incongruity and utter disregard of probability or nature? For, after he has thus willfully debased his moral teacher by a low occupation, is there one word that he puts into his mouth, or one sentiment of which he makes him the organ, that has the most remote reference to that occupation? Is there anything in his learned, abstracted, and logical harangues that savors of the calling that is ascribed to him? Are any of their materials such as a peddler could possibly have dealt in? Are the manners, the diction, the sentiments, in any the very smallest degree accommodated to a person in that condition? Or are they not eminently and conspicuously such as could not by possibility belong to it? A man who went about selling flannel and pocket-handkerchiefs in this lofty diction would soon frighten away all his customers, and would infallibly pass either for a madman or for some learned and affected gentleman who, in a frolic, had taken up a character which he was peculiarly ill qualified for supporting.

The absurdity in this case, we think, is palpable and glaring; but it is exactly of the same nature with that which infects the whole substance of the work—a puerile ambition of singularity engrafted on an unlucky prediliction for truisms, and an affected passion for simplicity and humble life, most awkwardly combined with a taste for mystical refinements and all the gorgeousness of obscure phraseology. His taste for simplicity is evinced by sprinkling up and down his interminable declamations a few descriptions of baby-houses, and of old hats with wet brims; and his amiable partiality for humble life, by assuring us that a wordy rhetorician, who talks about Thebes and allegorizes all the heathen mythology, was once a peddler, and making him break in upon his magnificent orations with two or three awkward notices of something that he had seen when selling winter raiment about the country, or of the changes in the state of society which had almost annihilated his former calling.

APPENDIX E

MATTHEW ARNOLD—BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Matthew Arnold was born December 24, 1822, at Laleham, England. His father was Thomas Arnold, famous as a moral and religious leader of his time, and as master of Rugby School, which he brought, by reason of his nobly constructive personality, into the front rank of English public schools. Arnold's childhood and young manhood were therefore spent in surroundings of the highest social and intellectual culture. After graduating from Oxford and receiving a fellowship, he was for a few years secretary of Lord Lansdowne, a prominent statesman. In 1851 he resigned his fellowship, married, and was appointed an inspector of schools. He spent thirty-five years in this service, which at times led him into extensive studies of continental school systems.

It is as a man of letters, however, that Arnold is best known. Despite the very exacting tasks of his office, he was ceaselessly active in literature. He was critic, essayist, poet. His criticism, based on a very wide and exact knowledge of modern, as well as ancient literature and philosophy, was both literary and social. It was criticism highly analytical and searching and, as much as criticism can be, objective, impartial, and judicial. He was probably foremost of all Englishmen of his day in a relentless, intellectual search into the shortcomings of his generation in the total art of living—social, intellectual, artistic. Arnold's highest honors in literature came in his appointment as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, a position that he filled for ten years from 1857.

Prominent in Arnold's literary work stand his *Poems* of 1849 and 1853; *On Translating Homer,* 1861; *Essays in Criticism,* 1865; *Mixed Essays,* 1879; *Discourses in America,* 1885; and *Essays in Criticism, Second Series,* 1888.

He died suddenly at Liverpool, April 15, 1888.

For several reasons Arnold is especially fitted to explain Wordsworth. In the first place, although fifty-two years younger than the venerable poet, he knew him personally as well as a younger man can know a neighbor so far past him in the journey

of life. Ten years before he died, Thomas Arnold had established his vacation home in the Lake District about a mile from Rydal Mount, the home of Wordsworth. Here Matthew Arnold had spent his holidays as a young man in that combination of outdoor athletics and studies that makes up the English undergraduate's vacation. His father and Wordsworth, although a quarter of a century separated the two, had much in common, and during the season when the Arnolds were in the north there was almost daily intercourse between the families. The strong bond between the Master of Rugby and the Poet Laureate was the interest that each of them took in the social-religious life of England. There was in each something of the mystic strain of thought that made speculation about the unseen attractive, and yet a hard core of sense that prevented either of them from leaving far the tried paths of human advance. To each of them duty was a controlling passion, and the rendering of the greatest possible service to mankind the measure of a man's worth.

Matthew Arnold, though differing greatly from his father and from Wordsworth in temperament, was of the same moral mold. The pursuit of truth and the living it into the experience of life were the common ideals of each of the three men, though time had placed them in three different generations. Hence it is that Arnold so thoroughly understands Wordsworth and so sympathetically interprets him. The young poet, though he differed from the elder both as a poet and in theology, agreed with him nevertheless as to the essential purposes of life. To both, character was of supreme importance, and though Wordsworth's life was spent in building up character from the emotional side, and Arnold's spent in building it up from the intellectual side, their common purpose was the elevation of man and society by a tonic education of men's souls.

Arnold wrote his essay upon Wordsworth as an introduction to a selected edition of Wordsworth's poems which he compiled in 1879. This edition was for the general poetry-reading public of mature persons. His purpose in the essay is therefore to show Wordsworth at his true value in comparison with other poets of widest reputation. What he says of the inevitableness of Wordsworth is basic. Poetry that is great gives us the impression that its elements could not be otherwise arranged. Words and rhythm and sentiment appear to have a relationship as definite and unbreakable as the arrangement of atoms in a complex molecule.

This is inevitableness. This is the highest praise that Arnold gives Wordsworth as an artist, and it is high praise indeed.

As one may suspect from reading the essay, Arnold is less attracted to the mystic strain in Wordsworth than to other characteristics. Indeed, there is so little in common between the two men in this particular that it is a bit surprising that Arnold does not record in more direct terms his lack of faith in Wordsworth's intuitions.

Arnold's verse tribute to Wordsworth following his essay is a pleasing example of his own fineness in elegiac verse.

APPENDIX F

LONGER NOTES FOR THE POEMS

Tintern Abbey (p. 48)

In 1793 when on a walking tour with his old college friend, Robert Jones, Wordsworth visited Goodrich Castle—where he met the little girl of "We Are Seven"—and near that, Tintern Abbey on the Wye. His second visit to the place in 1798 recalled the sensations of the first and made him think of what nature had been to him during more than twenty years.

The scene around him there is one that has moved many a soul less sensitive than his, and to this day so retains its characteristics that the first twenty lines of the poem are of photographic exactness. The sides of the valley, worn by the Wye in its rush from the hills, are clothed in a luxuriant growth of herbs, bushes, and trees fed by the rich soil and the damp, mild climate, wherever the farmers have not cut away the growth for their small fields.

"Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known" (p. 56)

This and the following four poems in the text ("She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways," "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal," "Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower," and "I Traveled among Unknown Men") were composed at nearly the same time, and possess, moreover, poetic and emotional unity. What we know of Wordsworth's habit of uniting experiences from quite varied sources in one poem should put us on our guard against reading these five poems as a record of actual events. It is enough to guess that they arose from an emotional experience, deep though "recollected in tranquillity." They are notable for a union of passion deep yet reserved, with directness and simplicity of expression.

These five poems contain unforgettable phrasings, which exemplify the perfect union of imagination and expression, the exquisite fitness of wording combined with vision. In them we

recognize Wordsworth's right to rank among the great spirit of poetry. By such specific flashes as these poems exhibit, the passionate truth of a whole experience—for the unseeing, vague or commonplace—is carried "alive into the heart." Such truth is in sharp contrast with the merely superficial record of appearance which so many of the eighteenth century poets, including Pope, relied upon in their appeal to the feelings.

Michael (p. 88)

This poem is founded on facts, both as to events and as to scene. Though Wordsworth never knew the shepherd and his family, the site of their home was but a short half-hour's walk from Dove Cottage, where the poem was written, and the sheepfold was but a few minutes farther up on Greenhead Ghyll, where a few moss-covered stones still in order (1924) show the remains of the sheepfold.

No poem of equal length seems to have cost Wordsworth more pains. He worked at it for several weeks, making himself ill with the labor (see Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal,* Grasmere, autumn of 1800). Wordsworth depicts in Michael a person whose salient qualities of mind and soul are the result of a simple, rigorous, and devout life molded and sustained by his wholesome life as a shepherd.

Stanzas Written in . . Thomson's "Castle of Indolence" (p. 116)

James Thomson, 1700-1748, in his "Castle of Indolence," humorously includes a description of his own person and appearance written mainly by one of his friends, Lord Lyttleton. Wordsworth, adopting the stanzaic form of Thomson, which the former poet had taken from Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* characterizes himself in the first four stanzas and Coleridge in the last four.

Tradition and other evidence seem to agree that the portraits are substantially correct. Wordsworth's verse often gives the impression of coldness. Yet his incidental references in his poems to his feelings show him to have had a deep sense of emotional conflict within himself. The style, consciously imitative, gave him much trouble. (See Dorothy's *Journal,* May 9-11, 1802.) To appreciate the poem fully one should read "The Castle of Indolence," especially I, 67 ff.

Resolution and Independence (p. 118)

This poem expresses personal emotion against a background of particular vividness. The mood of the poem was not unreasonable. Wordsworth's published work had brought him thus far little except ridicule. He wished to marry; his income allowed only the barest possible living, and his inheritance was still not paid; and though he had set out on the path of literature and idealism with a courageous heart, he well knew the failure of others who had passed that way with aspirations as high.

Nuns Fret Not (p. 124)

This sonnet Wordsworth prefixed to his "Miscellaneous Sonnets" as they stand in his own arrangement of his poems. It shows his attitude toward the sonnet form. It has been a matter of general astonishment among critics that Wordsworth, often tiresomely diffuse, should have been able to express himself so successfully as he did in the formal and exacting limits of the sonnet and to have added in this form enduring treasures to English literature.

If the student has not studied the sonnet as a form he should become familiar with its structure before reading farther. When Wordsworth began to write sonnets, the form had almost lapsed from English verse, few sonnets having been written since the time of Milton.

To a Highland Girl (p. 156)

Wordsworth possessed by nature and had intensified by exercise a faculty of mind for renewing and remembering experiences of peculiar beauty and of storing these up for future use and pleasure. These he could call up at will and enjoy in his hours of quiet, so that, to him, to be alone was to be in the presence of beauty and joy. Indeed, the beauty and the joy seemed to increase with time, and to gather force by reason of the accreted memories of the scene or of the pleasure.

It may be noted here as well as elsewhere that Wordsworth's criteria of physical beauty were not probably those that an artist would approve; they were shown rather in spiritual and emotional qualities, as seen in figure, gesture, and as heard in the voice.

Wordsworth's aim was to bring out the kindliness, benignity, and beauty of character of whomsoever he had in mind.

"I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud" (p. 169)

Dorothy Wordsworth says in her journal of Tuesday, April 15, 1802, "When we were in the woods beyond Gobarrow Park [at the southwestern shore of Ullswater] we saw a few daffodils close to the waterside. We fancied that the sea had floated the seeds ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about and above them; some rested their heads upon these stones, as on a pillow, for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, that blew upon them over the lake; they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing. The wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot, and a few stragglers higher up; but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway." Wordsworth says in a note upon this poem, that Mary Wordsworth composed the fine lines,

> They flash upon that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude.

See the note on "To a Highland Girl," page 402.

Ode: Intimations of Immortality (p. 192)

Wordsworth worked upon this ode for some years. It expresses the strong intuition of his childhood and youth that his soul had been through experiences previous to his birth, and his consciousness that spirit is the only reality. He felt these intuitions to be slipping from him, and here and elsewhere expresses his pain at the loss of them.

Wordsworth said, "This was composed during my residence at Town-end, Grasmere. Two years at least passed between the writing of the four first stanzas and the remaining part. To the attentive and competent reader the whole sufficiently explains

itself; but there may be no harm in adverting here to particular feelings or experiences of my own mind on which the structure of the poem partly rests. Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere—

> A simple child,
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death—

"But it was not so much from feelings of animal vivacity that my difficulty came as from a sense of the indomitableness of the Spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost to persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated, in something of the same way, to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over the remembrances, as is expressed in the lines—

> Obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,
> Fallings from us, vanishings, etc.

To that dream-like vividness and splendor which invest objects of sight in childhood, everyone, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony, and I need not dwell upon it here; but having in the poem regarded it as presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion, which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of man presents an analogy in its

favor. Accordingly, a pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations; and, among all persons acquainted with classic literature, is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy. Archimedes said that he could move the world if he had a point whereon to rest his machine. Who has not felt the same aspirations as regards the world of his own mind? Having to wield some of its elements when I was impelled to write this poem on the 'Immortality of the Soul,' I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a poet."

The ode as a type of poetic composition is a lyric of exalted strain, dignified and lofty in subject and expression. Generally, as in the present ode, the form is irregular, being designed to suit and express the varying phases of emotion through which the lyric passes. Sometimes, as in the "Ode to Duty," the ode follows a set stanzaic form. A third type, the Pindaric ode, is found rarely in English, and is not used by Wordsworth.

Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle (p. 199)

Brougham Castle now, as in Wordsworth's time, is in ruins. It is on the River Emont, two miles east of Penrith, where Mrs. Wordsworth lived as a girl. The region round about was the ancestral home of the Wordsworths and Hutchinsons, and, lying just outside the Lake District and in the line of Wordsworth's frequent journeys, was perfectly familiar to him.

Henry, Lord Clifford, circa 1454-1523, an ancestral enemy of the House of York, was, because of his father's deeds, deprived of his lawful estates for twenty-five years until they were restored at the succession of the House of Lancaster in the person of Henry VII in 1485. During these years he was concealed as a shepherd in the families who served his mother, Lady Margaret Vesci, on the estate of Sir Lancelot Threkeld.

Laodamia (p. 207)

Wordsworth's interest in classic literature was not great. The present is the first poem he wrote depending wholly upon classic

legend, and was probably occasioned by the fact that in tutoring his son for college he came across a commentary upon *The Aeneid*, VI, that spoke of the withering of the trees in sympathy with the spirit of the dead.

Charles Lamb considered "Laodamia" "a very original poem"; "original," he said, "with reference to your own manner." It cost Wordsworth much toil, but in it he achieved the spirit of the noblest classic literature, which teaches moderation of the desires of the body, and living the life of the spirit. It is well to note the classic terseness of lines 73-75, 139 ff., and to compare this quality with the compact expression in "Tintern Abbey" and other poems.

The old Greek legend tells that Protesilaus, the first of the Greeks to fall at the siege of Troy, was so beloved by his wife that she was granted her prayer that he might return to life. When the respite was past she went with him back to the underworld.

Dion (p. 223)

The first stanza, given below, was removed from the poem in 1837, because Wordsworth felt that it "detained the reader too long from the subject."

Fair is the swan, whose majesty, prevailing
O'er breezeless water, on Locarno's lake,
Bears him on while proudly sailing
He leaves behind a moon-illumined wake.
Behold! the mantling spirit of reserve
Fashions his neck into a goodly curve;
An arch thrown back between luxuriant wings
Of whitest garniture, like fir-tree boughs
To which, on some unruffled morning, clings
A flaky weight of winter's purest snows!
—Behold!—as with a gushing impulse heaves
That downy prow, and softly cleaves
The mirror of the crystal flood,
Vanish inverted hill, and shadowy wood,
And pendent rocks, where'er, in gliding state,
Winds the mute creature without visible mate
Or rival, save the queen of night
Showering down a silver light,
From heaven, upon her chosen favorite!

The story of Dion may best be understood in the original account among Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* of illustrious Greeks and Romans. Dion (408-353 B. C.) was an eminent citizen of Syracuse under the tyrannies of Dionysius and his son, and was the brother-in-law of the former and the uncle of the latter. He had been converted to the teachings of Plato when the philosopher visited Syracuse. Afterwards he was suspected of political activity by the younger Dionysius and banished. In Greece he collected a small band of mercenaries and, landing in Sicily, entered Syracuse, as Wordsworth relates, at the head of these and large forces who came to him from the surrounding country. His object was to give to Syracuse a government founded as Plato had conceived that government should be founded, upon justice and liberty.

To secure his own position as tyrant, as a means to this end, was not easy; for though the people, relieved from the cruelty of Dionysius, received him at first gladly, they were incapable of concerted action, split into factions, and quick to shift in allegiance from one flattering leader to another. Herakleides, a totally unscrupulous chief, in one instance after another betrayed the interests of the people, siding against Dion, now with this party, and now with that. Dion several times overcame him by force of character or circumstances, treated him with magnanimity, and entrusted him with important offices. It became increasingly evident, however, that two men of such opposite principles could not continue as leaders, and Dion at length yielded to the importunities of his friends, whom he allowed to kill Herakleides. Soon afterwards, Dion was greeted by the apparition, as told in stanza 6 of the poem. Only a short time then passed before Kallippus, closest confidant of Dion, formed a conspiracy against his chief and assassinated him. Plutarch does not, apparently, consider that the assassination of Dion was a punishment for his consenting to the death of Herakleides, but sees divine vengeance relentlessly following the traitor Kallippus to a wretched death.

Dion was a man of great magnanimity, of pure motives, and of high ideals. He lived in simple and austere frugality, but he was of so cold, dignified, and haughty a manner that he was unpopular and seems never to have won the confidence of the undeserving mob of Syracusan citizens.

Taken as a whole, Dion seems an example of a man whose ideals were too high for practical working out as he attempted to apply them. His failure seems due, not to having consented to

the death of a thrice-proved traitor to the interests of Syracuse, but to his not having long before found reasons to remove Herakleides as an obstacle to free government. Although Wordsworth was quite at liberty in an imaginative poem to put what interpretation he pleases upon Dion's character, it is not best for the student, if he would read clearly a sad chapter in the struggle of men out of ignorance and betrayal toward liberty, to be guided wholly by Wordsworth's verdict upon this valiant soldier.

The Recluse (p. 244)

This selection from *The Recluse*, which was to be the great inclusive poetical work of Wordsworth's life, and of which *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* were to form large sections, is a declaration of the object of Wordsworth's poetical purpose in general. So fully did he feel this to be the case, that when he abandoned his attempt to write *The Recluse*, and published *The Excursion* as his total effort toward his former goal, he used these lines from *The Recluse* to introduce *The Excursion* and to justify his total purpose as a poet.

It will be seen that his great end in view was to give joy to mankind—not entertainment, merely, or transient pleasure, but the great joy of a constructive, commanding force within the soul. He himself had once felt this power in full current; afterwards he had suffered the bitterest disappointments that may come to a man jealous of man's right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness—loss of faith in his kind, utter pessimism. Once more, however, as he writes, he feels himself refreshed from this well of life within—the living sense of harmony with all created things—and he burns to tell men how they, too, may possess this birthright.

The passage beginning line 24 should be compared with corresponding passages from the first, and especially the beginnings of the third and seventh books of *Paradise Lost*, allusion to which is open and obvious. His feeling for the relationship between man and nature is nowhere more fully expressed than in lines 56-71.

The Prelude (p. 248)

The following "Advertisement" to *The Prelude*, written by John Carter, Wordsworth's secretary, was prefixed to the poem upon its publication a few months after the author's death:

ADVERTISEMENT

The following poem was commenced in the beginning of the year 1799, and completed in the summer of 1805.

The design and occasion of the work are described by the author in his Preface to *The Excursion,* first published in 1814, where he thus speaks:

"Several years ago, when the author retired to his native mountains with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such an employment.

"As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them.

"That work, addressed to a dear friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the author's intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it, was a determination to compose a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society, and to be entitled *The Recluse;* as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.

"The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labor which he had proposed to himself; and the two works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the Ante-chapel has to the body of a Gothic Church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor pieces, which have been long before the public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive reader to have such connection with the main work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices."

Such was the author's language in the year 1814.

It will thence be seen, that the present poem was intended to be introductory to *The Recluse,* and that *The Recluse,* if completed, would have consisted of Three Parts. Of these, the Second Part alone, viz., *The Excursion,* was finished, and given to the world by the author.

The First Book of the First Part of *The Recluse* still [1850] remains in manuscript; but the Third Part was only

planned. The materials of which it would have been formed have, however, been incorporated, for the most part, in the author's other publications, written subsequently to *The Excursion.*

The friend to whom the present poem is addressed was the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who was resident in Malta, for the restoration of his health, when the greater part of it was composed.

Mr. Coleridge read a considerable portion of the poem while he was abroad; and his feelings, on hearing it recited by the author (after his return to his own country) are recorded in his verses, addressed to Mr. Wordsworth, which will be found in the *Sybylline Leaves,* p. 197, ed. 1817, or *Poetical Works by S. T. Coleridge,* Vol. 1, p. 206.

RYDAL MOUNT,
July 13th, 1850.

The poem, which extends to fourteen books, was begun when Wordsworth left the city of Goslar in 1799, after spending the winter there. The opening picture is composite, as is the background in many of his poems. That is, the author has in mind some such city as London rather than the German town.

One who wishes to know Wordsworth, his mental habits, attitudes, likes and dislikes, and the growth of his total inner nature, must make a careful study of *The Prelude.* Throughout runs a feeling perceived in the "Intimations of Immortality," a regret that what Wordsworth felt to be the real inspiration of childhood and youth had passed, that it could not be recalled, and the fear that with it was passing also the power of poetic expression. Such, unfortunately, was to prove the fact in his career, since within five years after he finished *The Prelude* his period of truest poetical inspiration had come to a close.

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